

ALTERNATIVES *to*
DEMOCRACY *in*
Twentieth-Century
EUROPE

**COLLECTIVIST VISIONS
of MODERNITY**

SABRINA P. RAMET

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*Alternatives to Democracy
in Twentieth-Century Europe:
Collectivist Visions of Modernity*

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Collectivist Visions of
Modernity***

SABRINA P. RAMET



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*For Roger Griffin
and
for the healthcare providers of Norway
and the taxi drivers of Trøndelag*

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Preface: Organization of the Book

This is a work of comparative history.

Why Study History

We study history for many reasons. Among these are (1) to understand what factors lead to what results, (2) to understand the contending interests in history and how these interests may have evolved over time, and (3) to come to see which systems have advantages in which areas. I do *not* believe that there has been any actually existing system that has been best for everything. For example, the Soviet Union, which restricted people's freedom of movement and freedoms of speech, assembly, and religion, nonetheless ranked high among countries that promoted gender equality. By contrast, the United States, which allows unhindered freedom of movement (except of areas restricted for military and security reasons) alongside extensive freedoms of speech, assembly, and religion, nonetheless continues to lag behind several European countries in terms of achieving gender equality. Norway comes closest, ranking as the most democratic country in the world in 2017, according to *The Economist*, with the freest media in the world for the same year according to Reporters Without Borders, but offering the second best tap water in the world (just behind first-place Switzerland) and, according to the World Health Organization, the eleventh best health-care system (with France, Italy, and San Marino named to best, second best, and third best in the world, with the United States trailing in thirty-seventh place).

History Not Static

When a system lasts for only a short time, as in the case of the Nazi Third Reich, which lasted for barely twelve years, such change as there may be in policies is likely to remain within the framework of a stable system of values. However, when a system lasts for two centuries or more, it is likely that there may be significant changes in policy over time. Such change may reflect (1) evolution in the values held by the inhabitants of the country; (2) the accomplishment of certain tasks and the necessity to confront new challenges; (3) a change in the distribution of influence within the system; (4) in pluralist systems, political turnover at the top; (5) a combination of two or more of the foregoing. Among the systems discussed in chapters 2–5, the Soviet Union lasted the longest—seventy-four years from the October Revolution of 1917 to its dismantlement at the end of 1991. The seven and a half decades of its existence were, however, enough to see dramatic changes in policies, tasks, challenges, and the means adopted to accomplish the tasks undertaken by the elite.

The Argument

My argument in the book is threefold. First, that the Soviets, Italian Fascists, German Nazis, and Spanish anarchists all strove for an alternative modernity, giving priority to collective interests over individual interests. Second, that in each case there can be found to have been local debates, in which rival politicians spelled out their rival visions of the given political program. Third, that people live best in a liberal democracy, in which their basic needs are taken care of, and in which the core values of liberalism—the rule of law, individual rights, tolerance of religious, ethnic/racial, and sexual minorities, respect for the harm principle, equality, and neutrality of the state in matters of religion—are safeguarded and respected. In chapters 2–5, I spell out how the Soviet, Fascist, Nazi, and anarchist leaders tried to operationalize their visions and how their programs affected political life, the economic sphere, the religious sphere, gender relations, the arts, and culture generally. In the final chapter, after discussing the components and advantages of liberal democracy, I analyze the choke

points where democratic systems may be undermined and subverted—the voting process itself, control of the highest judicial bodies, the independent media, the manipulation of fear and hatred of designated “out groups,” and heightened surveillance. Following this, I explore how democracy has been subverted in Hungary since 2010 and how it has been under attack in the United States since 2012 and in Poland since 2015.

Methodology and Conventions

In each chapter, I present an overview of the chief scholarly debates concerning the given case, followed by a discussion of the intellectual/ideological underpinnings of the system, together with the historical context in which each of these systems arose. This is followed, in turn, by an analysis of how the participants in each collective enterprise argued over the vision, and how the group that emerged victorious in these disputes would be able to determine the society’s path.

Among the conventions I have followed in this book are: first, although I provide the dates for all persons of any significance in chapters 2–6, I have opted to omit that information in chapter 1, in order to make the reading of that chapter as comfortable as possible; second, following a well-established convention which, nonetheless, is sometimes ignored, I write *Church*, with a capital “C,” when I refer to any ecclesiastical institution and *church*, with a lowercase “c,” when I refer to an ecclesiastical building used for liturgy; and third, following a convention which is common in fascist studies, I write *Fascist*, with a capital “F,” when I refer to Mussolini’s regime and adherents in Italy, 1922–1943, and *fascist*, with a lower-cased “f” when referring to generic fascism or fascist regimes or movements outside Italy.

The Selection of Cases

I have chosen to present those systems inspired by collectivist visions of alternative modernity, which, in the twentieth century have figured as major, influential political formations, attracting admirers beyond their

borders. In the 1930s, Fascism, Nazism, and anarchism were considered, even by persons committed to liberal democracy, to present important challenges to the liberal democratic project. Communism continued to constitute an important challenge until the Soviet bloc started to fall apart in the late 1980s, culminating in the dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991.

Sabrina P. Ramet
Saksvik, Norway

CHAPTER 1

Rival Visions of Alternative Modernity: An Introduction

This volume is about how values impact politics and about how politics reflects values, focusing on those regimes/systems that offered influential visions of alternative modernity between 1917 and 1991. Nineteen seventeen was the year the Bolsheviks (communists) seized power in Russia; 1991 was the year the Soviet Union expired. In addition to the Soviet communist, Fascist, Nazi, and Spanish anarchist cases, I also discuss, in the final chapter of this volume, the advantages and vulnerabilities of liberal democracy, and examine the erosion of democracy in recent years in Hungary, Poland, and the United States of America. Some values are virtually universal, such as justice or civil order, but there may be—and have been—differences in the way in which these values have been interpreted and safeguarded. Other values have, historically, been contested; here we may think of such values as religious toleration (which began to be advocated seriously only in the sixteenth century by Jean Bodin, and in the seventeenth century by John Locke), social equality (which was a key demand registered in the French Revolution that began in 1789, but which was repudiated by the Nazis and Fascists), and individual rights (rejected not only by the Nazis and Fascists, but also by Soviet communists).

Values are preserved and transmitted through national ideologies, and defined and promoted in political visions. What, then, are ideologies, values, and visions? Ideology has been defined in various ways. In 1974, Willard Mullins defined *ideology* as a “logically coherent system of symbols which, within a more or less sophisticated conception of history, links the cognitive and evaluative perception of one’s social condition—

especially its prospects for the future—to a program of collective action for the maintenance, alteration, or transformation of society.”¹

Another definition, from a decade earlier, describes ideologies as “systems of belief that are elaborate, integrated, and coherent, that justify the exercise of power, explain and judge historical events, identify political right and wrong, [and] set forth the interconnections (causal and moral) between politics and other spheres of activity.”² In the following pages, by *ideology*, I shall mean *a systematic code of meanings assigned to historical events and symbols, in which lessons are drawn from the past, in which the nation’s role and identity in the present are defined, and in which challenges in and solutions for the future are outlined.*

Challenges in and solutions for the future lie, of course, at the heart of what I mean by a (political) vision. Henceforth, by *vision*, I shall mean *a blueprint for the future, in which certain core moral values are protected, in which certain goals for society are spelled out, and in which the political means to achieve those goals are specified and justified.* This, in turn, requires definitions of both *values* and, specifically, *moral values*. The most influential definition of a *value* is said to be that offered by Clyde Kluckhohn, who in 1951 defined *value* as “a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable, which influences the selection of available modes, means, and ends of action.”³ The *Encyclopedia of Sociology* has offered a definition of *values* as “evaluative beliefs that synthesize affective and cognitive elements to orient people to the world in which they live.”⁴ In this volume, by a *moral value*, I shall mean *any fundamental good, such as freedom, equality, or human rights or, in the case of the Nazis, the rights of the race.* Typically, the laws and institutions of a country are designed in such a way as to safeguard and promote the core moral values of a society.

FIGHTING AGAINST INDIVIDUALISM, LEGALISM, MATERIALISM, AND DECADENCE

The fascists (both Italian Fascists and German Nazis), communists, and anarchists hated each other. Yet they shared some characteristics in common. All three reviled individualism, hated representative democracy

and legalism, denounced materialism, and wanted to suppress all forms of what they considered decadence (in Soviet parlance, bourgeois decadence). *Materialism* is understood here as “a way of thinking that gives too much importance to material possessions rather than to spiritual or intellectual things”;⁵ as such, it is closely related to but not identical with *consumerism*. Moreover, each of them aspired to construct an “alternative modernity”—not the same one of course, but a modernity purged of those things to which they were opposed. As such, they were all modernists, looking to construct a better future. Although the Fascist, Nazi, and Soviet regimes all put the historical past to political uses, this was not for the purpose of returning the country to earlier ways of life, but in order to use the past to set the nation, in each case, on a new path. Among other things, *modernism* refers to the cultural and political commitment “to reinstate a sense of transcendent value, meaning, or purpose in order to reverse the Western culture’s progressive loss of a homogeneous value system.” For the modernists examined in this volume, the West was characterized by “spiritual bankruptcy” and had to be rebuilt from the bottom up.⁶

The Fascists, Nazis, Soviet communists, and Spanish anarchists were all *collectivists*, meaning that they held that the needs and interests of the nation/race/working class/community necessarily took priority over the needs and interests of individuals, although the Spanish anarchists, influenced by Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Proudhon, believed that communal organization without the dominion of the state had the potential to foster “the individual’s absolute freedom.”⁷ In the first three cases, it was the ruling party that interpreted what those needs and interests were. By contrast, *individualism* may be understood as “the doctrine that the interests of the individual should take precedence over the interests of the state or social group.”⁸ Adam Smith, a Scottish moral philosopher and political economist, argued that if individuals pursued their own economic interests, this would work better for the overall economy than if the economy were planned from above: this theory is sometimes known as the “invisible hand.” While liberal democratic theory emerged as a doctrine founded on individualism, totalitarian regimes—Fascist, Nazi, and Soviet communist—embraced collectivism,⁹ which had not only political but also moral and economic dimensions. The Bolshevik radical

Aleksandra Kollontai looked to a future when “society would be built on principles of ‘comradely solidarity,’ the ‘consciousness of a community of interests,’ and the “emotional and spiritual ties established between the members of a ... collective.” All individualism would die in the merger of the “wills and souls” of the participants. “The single will is lost, disappears, in the collective effort.”¹⁰

Benito Mussolini, the Italian Fascist *Duce* (leader), explained that “For Fascism the State is absolute, individuals and groups relative... . The Fascist State organizes the nation, but it leaves the individual adequate elbowroom. It has curtailed useless or harmful liberties while preserving those which are essential. In such matters the individual cannot be the judge, but the State only.”¹¹ Indeed, for Italy’s Fascists and German Nazis alike, individuals derived their worth from their conformity, obedience, and utility to the collective, as defined and determined by the regime—in Italy, under the slogan “Believe, obey, fight.” The anarchists, while recognizing that social and political power is a reality, nonetheless were opposed to government and hierarchy alike. Peter Kropotkin, the famous Russian anarchist thinker and activist, held that it was not necessary to bring compulsion and force to bear in order to maintain social peace and civil order. On the contrary, Kropotkin was convinced, “human freedom is only possible where men [and women] abandon the state and seek to create social life through the principles of federalism, mutual aid, and self-discipline.” For him as for other anarchists, liberty was “the highest of all human values”¹²—and, thus, the anarchist expectation that individuals take active part in the common political project of dismantling the state and maintaining the social organism without authority does not compromise the effort to maximize liberty, according to the anarchists.

The fascists, in both Italy and Germany despised democracy because, in their view, it provided an arena for endless feuding, with opposing parties seeking to advance rival special interests, rather than the common good, and also because of what Mussolini called “the absurd conventional lie of political equalitarianism, the habit of collective irresponsibility, [and] the myth of felicity and indefinite progress.”¹³ Communists and anarchists held that the state was an engine for the domination of one class over others. Hence, for Marx and Engels, the founders of com-

munism, and for that matter for Vladimir I. Lenin as well, the state would eventually wither away, taking with it all bureaucracy and police, laws and regulations. The anarchists were not content to wait for the state to wither away gradually and wanted to abolish it as quickly as possible. It is not surprising then that the anarchists, like the communists, found no place for law in their vision of an alternative modernity. Thus, for the Soviets, the continued passage of laws in the Soviet Union was somehow problematic. As Mikhail Krasnov put it, "Soviet jurisprudence theory did not recognize the concept of a law-governed state (meaning the control of law over power), classifying such a concept as a category of bourgeois law."¹⁴ Indeed, even as late as the 1970s, the *Marxist-Leninist General Theory of the State and Law* ruled that "The idea that law, whether understood as a supra-class norm of obligation, as an abstract, comprehensive kind of justice, or as a natural right of man, rules *over* the state and *over* the political authority, binding and limiting it, is by its nature a disguise for class dictatorship."¹⁵

In the Third Reich, by contrast, there was a place for law, but Nazi legislation was driven in part by the impetus to transform society and to promote the emergence of a new super-race of Aryan, heterosexual, physically healthy, and obedient soldiers and mothers for the fatherland. Thus we find the Law against the Disproportionately High Number of Jews Attending High Schools, the Law on the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring, the Law for the Protection of Young People, and the Law to Restore the Professional Civil Service which, despite its innocent-sounding name, introduced anti-Jewish criteria into hiring and retention in service.¹⁶ The Nazis also used criminal law as a weapon against opponents and anti-Nazi groups, while a pledge to wage "a ruthless battle against those who, by their activities, injure the general good,"¹⁷ was operationalized by effectively criminalizing communists and Jews. Finally, developments in administrative law included

the displacement of the notion of legality, now vilified as "liberal" or "positivist" ... ; the curtailing of judicial review of "acts of political leadership" and discretionary political decisions; the elimination of personal right to public law and its replacement by the obligation of duty that was open to every kind of intervention and manipulation;

[and] the use of the notion of the common weal to abolish normative barriers and adapt the older administrative law to the “necessities of state.”¹⁸

Materialism was also a problem for the collectivists under scrutiny in this volume. In this context, I do not mean “dialectical materialism,” the methodology of Marxism–Leninism, but rather the overvaluation of material possessions, nowadays typically manifested in the endless quest to accumulate more and more consumer goods, technological gadgets, lush carpets, fancy cars, devices intended to provide amusement, and products and services designed to make life comfortable, convenient, and comatose. For the collectivists, materialism—understood in this way—smacked of self-indulgence, of catering to individualism, which is to say “the view that, for each individual, the end which is of ultimate value is his own well-being”¹⁹ and that each individual must be the judge of what is in his or her own best interest. For collectivists, as we have seen, this formula is utterly alien.

Finally, there is the challenge of *decadence* or time wasting, which, for collectivists, included such things as idle gossip, drunkenness, philandering, gambling, and art for art’s sake. Martin Heidegger, the self-declared “philosopher of Being” who joined the Nazi party in 1933, was disgusted by the “idle talk,” “tranquility in inauthentic Being,” “hustle” of everyday life, and “alienation,” which he identified in Germany’s Weimar Republic (1918–33). In his mind, this meant that his fellow Germans were “plung[ing] ... into the groundlessness of [the] nullity of inauthentic everydayness.”²⁰ In 1909, Filippo Marinetti issued his *Futurist Manifesto*, which would have a certain influence among Fascists, excoriating the decadence he saw. He demanded the destruction of “museums, libraries, academies of every sort” and a sustained fight against “moralism, feminism, [and] every opportunistic or utilitarian cowardice.”²¹ Marinetti extolled “war—the world’s only hygiene—militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for women.”²² Julius Evola, a convert from futurism to Fascism, believed “that Western society was in terminal decline because it had moved away from the hierarchical, warrior-priest society which he saw as central to successful previous civilisations.”²³

The solution, in Evola's view, was to construct a new sociopolitical order "around a new secular religion and provide it with a sense of purpose worth defending."²⁴ Italian Fascists promised to build a new community in which not only decadence, but also alienation (a bugaboo also for Marx and his acolytes), would be purged from society; Nazi ideology likewise found decadence abhorrent, identifying the United States as "the epitome of capitalist decadence."²⁵

Marxist-Leninists felt a similar contempt for "bourgeois decadence," often identified with "idle" pleasure seeking or activities in which the interests of socialism were not paramount. At the height of Stalinism, true romance was understood as love between a boy and a girl for whom the most sacred duty was to work to fulfill the five-year plan. All comrades, Lenin advised, should "have a lively sense of their responsibility, knowing as they do from experience that an organisation of real revolutionaries will stop at nothing to rid itself of an unworthy member."²⁶ "Bourgeois decadence" could be manifested in card-playing, wearing Western (especially American) fashions, dancing to the fox trot, the Charleston, and Dixieland jazz, and of course formalism in music.²⁷ "Formalism" in orchestral music, meaning the composition of music that did not consist of simple tunes one could whistle or lacked a transparent political agenda, was likewise seen as decadent. It was the charge brought in 1948 by culture boss Andrey Zhdanov against the Soviet Union's four most celebrated composers—Sergey Prokofiev, Dmitry Shostakovich, Dmitry Kabalevsky, and Aram Khachaturian, together with the unfortunate Vano Muradeli, whose opera, *The Great Friendship*, which had just premiered, had been designed to honor Stalin's native Georgia.²⁸ In the initial years after the Bolshevik seizure of power in late 1917, Lenin promoted a policy of extermination of the bourgeois class. Martin Ivanovich Latsis, chairman of the Red Army Cheka (Eastern Front), put it this way in November 1918:

We are not waging war against individual persons. We are exterminating the bourgeoisie as a class. During the investigation, do not look for evidence that the accused acted in deed or word against Soviet power. The first questions that you ought to put are: To what class does he belong? What is his origin? What is his education or profes-

sion? And it is these questions that ought to determine the fate of the accused. In this lies the significance and essence of the Red Terror.²⁹

The anarchists' disgust with what they perceived as decadence is perhaps less well known but is, nonetheless, part of the historical record. Vincent Sherry, for example, notes that anarchists' temper was aroused by decadence of any sort³⁰—perhaps especially by political decadence. Moreover, none other than Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, one of the nineteenth century's most influential anarchists, fretted that “we are living in an age of decadence, in which civic courage has been annihilated, personal virtue cast aside, the race trodden down, all sentiments falsified and depraved.”³¹ Along similar lines, Paul-Émile Borduas, a Quebec painter and an advocate of what he called “resplendent anarchy,” expressed his dismay at “the rationally ordained ... that lies at the complacent heart of decadence.”³²

The anarchists railed against the traditional values they associated with the Church, the monarchy, and rich landowners, but, where gender equality was concerned, they offered a mixed response, with women receiving less remuneration than men in some anarchist collectives, while nonetheless promoting gender equality in other ways. The three regimes examined herein also made concessions to traditional values—if not immediately, then after an interval of time. In the Soviet Union, for example, the sexual promiscuity which, in the early years, was viewed by the most radical Bolsheviks as progressive, gave way later to very strict sexual mores. Again, in 1938, under the pressure of rising international tensions, Stalin initiated the process of rehabilitating Russian nationalism, with corresponding changes to history textbooks and in other sectors. In this connection, the regime commissioned film director Sergey Eisenstein to bring out a trilogy of films devoted to the sixteenth-century Russian tsar, Ivan the Terrible (part 1 was released in 1944, though part 2 was banned for reasons explained in the next chapter). The two fascist regimes both promoted traditional roles for women—*Kinder, Küche, Kirche* (children, kitchen, church), as the Germans say. As Roger Eatwell has recorded, “the majority of Nazis sought to push women back into traditional roles, and ... married women were often dismissed to make way for men.”³³ The Nazi regime sought to stimulate

childbirth and extended more than a million loans to couples between 1933 and 1938, to be paid off with the birth of four children. The Italian Fascists also wanted to press women into traditional roles, both by encouraging working women to take jobs in traditionally feminine sectors such as textiles and the food industry, and, as in the Third Reich, by adopting measures to encourage women to stay home and bear children—among other things, by increasing restrictions on contraception and providing tax relief and subsidies to couples with children.³⁴ Even in the cultural sector, the Soviet, Fascist, and Nazi regimes repeatedly had recourse to traditional themes in their efforts to politicize art and music and put culture to political use.

In closing this section, it may be worth recalling Emilio Gentile's comment that Italian Fascism "confers a sacred status on an earthly entity (the nation, the country, the state, humanity, society, race, proletariat, history, liberty, or revolution) and renders it an absolute principle of collective existence, considers it the main source of values for individual and mass behaviour, and exalts it as the supreme ethical precept of public life. It thus becomes an object for veneration and dedication, even to the point of self-sacrifice."³⁵

WHY THESE CASES AND NOT OTHERS

The four political creeds examined in this book had five attributes in common. First, they were, in each case, charting a course to an alternative modernity, a modernity shorn of liberal-democratic and traditional-conservative culture alike, which required a destruction or uprooting of existing culture and a total reconstruction of society. Second, as explained above, all four political creeds were opposed to individualism, representative democracy and legalism, materialism, and "decadence." Third, all four subscribed to the idea that politics was primary, which in turn induced the Fascists, Nazis, and communists to establish, in each case, not just a political monopoly but also an organizational monopoly, under which no independent organizations were tolerated; the anarchists, by contrast, opted—in conditions of the Spanish Civil War—for secession from the body politic (although some

anarchists decided to join the Madrid government). Fourth, both the Third Reich and the Soviet regime nurtured an ambitious dream of disseminating their respective ideas more widely, thus something equivalent to a mission to convert or conquer the entire world,³⁶ with the Italian Fascist regime more “modestly” aiming “merely” to establish a regional empire embracing parts of the Mediterranean/Adriatic littoral and East Africa. Fifth, all four were critical of organized religion, though where the anarchists and, originally, the Soviet communists wanted to eradicate religion altogether, the Fascists and Nazis sought to harness religion and either tame it (in Italy) or redesign it to accord with Nazi ideology (in the Third Reich).

It would be an easy matter to list other nondemocratic regimes that came to life in twentieth-century Europe. One might think, for example, of the personal dictatorship of Marshal Józef Piłsudski in Poland, which lasted from 1926 to 1935,³⁷ or the royal dictatorship of King Carol II of Romania, 1930–40,³⁸ or the Axis collaborationist regimes of Monsignor Jozef Tiso in Slovakia,³⁹ Ante Pavelić in Croatia,⁴⁰ and Milan Nedić in Serbia,⁴¹ all of which were overthrown by the end of World War II.⁴² Or one might think of the corporatist-authoritarian regime in Portugal, which expired with the death of Portuguese strongman António de Oliveira Salazar in 1970,⁴³ or even the military junta that ruled Greece from 1967 to 1974. There are, however, several reasons why these other nondemocratic regimes do not find a place in this book. To begin with, the aforementioned regimes in Poland, Portugal, and Greece were motivated not by a vision of an alternative modernity, but by a program to bring order to a chaotic political scene, while Romania’s king Carol II was hostile to both democracy and fascism, and introduced his personal dictatorship on 10 February 1938, suspending constitutional protections. The following month he ordered the dissolution of all political parties.⁴⁴ The propaganda of King Carol’s regime evoked “organic nationalism, family, church, and the gospel of work ... All in all, it was a pseudo-radical semi-fascist burlesque, intended to stymie the Iron Guard and steal its ideological appeal.”⁴⁵ In other words, the royal dictatorship of King Carol II did not promote a collectivist vision of an alternative future.

Nor did the Greek colonels who seized power in Athens in April 1967. In launching their coup, they were motivated by fear that Andreas Papandreou, the “logical successor” of the aging George Papandreou, might pull Greece out of NATO and put in place a new policy of neutrality between East and West.⁴⁶ The Greek junta was harsh: it suppressed the political parties, forbade labor strikes, introduced censorship of the press, prohibited gatherings of more than five persons, and arrested more than 6,500 people. Although the government oversaw an economic policy that saw per capita income rise by more than 50 percent between 1967 and 1973, benefiting both the poor and the middle class, much of its program was “largely negative.” The Greek junta offered no inspiring vision of an alternative modernity and satisfied itself with efforts “to develop an ideology based on vague ideals of a new Helleno-Christian civilization.”⁴⁷ The Greek junta did not promote a totalitarian program and, thus, did not offer a collectivist program either. Moreover, the colonels associated with the junta were committed to leaving the social system as it was, which is to say bourgeois, to keep the economic system the same, but to neutralize the old politicians.⁴⁸ None of this qualifies as revolutionary.

Finally, where the Axis collaborationist regimes in Slovakia, Croatia, and Serbia are concerned, these lasted between three years (Nedić’s regime in Serbia) and six years (Tiso’s regime in Slovakia)—not long enough for any of them to develop an original ideology. They were all creatures of the Third Reich; yet there is no evidence that their watered down copies of the Nazi vision were elaborated beyond ridding their societies of “undesirables,” “repudiating the heritage of the Enlightenment,” and glorifying the peasantry, while assigning new meanings to the historical figures and events of the past.⁴⁹

A second consideration in the selection of cases is their salience in the scholarly literature and presence in scholarly debates. Interest in Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, and even the Spanish anarchists far exceeds interest in these other regimes, and the debates that have revolved around the Third Reich, Fascist Italy, the Soviet Union (especially in Stalin’s time) have been both more comprehensive and more global than such debates as have focused on those other regimes. Further, debates concerning the Spanish Civil War and Spanish anarchists have been far livelier and have

included a much larger number of scholar-participants than such debates as one may be able to find where, for example, Tiso's regime or King Carol II's royal dictatorship are concerned. And finally, while there continues to be lively interest among members of the public around the globe in the cases examined in this volume, to find equally intense interest in the Serbian, Croatian, Portuguese, or Greek regimes, for example, one would have to look to the publics in Serbia, Croatia, Portugal, and Greece respectively.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

Chapters 2–5 largely follow a common model, with chapters 2 and 5 each beginning with an account of the vision of an alternative modernity which animated the proponents of the given movement/regime, together with a summary of some of the major debates among scholars studying the given case. In chapter 2, this account of debates offers a summary of eight approaches to studying the Soviet Union, ranging from the totalitarian model to the interest group theory of Soviet politics to the national character school to the revolutionary mass movement regime approach, among others. Similarly, in chapter 5, a total of five debates concerning Spanish anarchism and the Spanish Civil War are enumerated—whether the insurrection launched by General Francisco Franco in 1936 was justified by the alleged destruction of the Republic by leftists or whether the Republic was still healthy and was only brought down by Franco's forces; the role played by Great Britain and the Soviet Union in the outcome of the Civil War; whether the defenders of the Republic committed more executions than Franco's insurgent forces or whether it was the other way around; whether executions by Republic forces were directed by the Republican leadership or not; and why Franco was ultimately victorious. In chapters 3 and 4, the order of presentation of visions and debates is reversed, because the debates relate to both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. However, the visions each of these regimes propounded were not identical and needed to be presented in the chapters devoted respectively to each of these regimes (Fascist Italy in chapter 3, Nazi Germany in chapter 4). The most salient debates

concerning these regimes were “whether fascism was revolutionary or reactionary; whether it could best be seen as the offspring of the conservative/elitist wing of liberalism (oriented, thus, to saving capitalism) or rather as involving a repudiation of the entire liberal tradition; whether it was a modernizing movement, seeking to fashion an alternative modernity rather than intrinsically antimodern; whether Italian Fascism and German Nazism should be seen as closely related members of a common genus or rather as genetically distinct; and finally, whether it makes sense to employ the word ‘totalitarian’ in relation to generic fascism.”⁵⁰

Each of these political formations pursued a clearly articulated vision, which was inspired by certain values and reflected in policies or, in the anarchist case, lines of approach. The Soviet vision revolved around the dream of a future egalitarian society, purged of religion, with Russian as a common *lingua franca*, and a shared Soviet loyalty alongside the distinct ethnic-national identities. The Soviets confirmed their commitment to promoting socioeconomic equality and education already under Stalin’s leadership. The Soviets worked hard to increase literacy⁵¹ (in many cases creating orthographies where none had existed before),⁵² made public education available to all, and fostered ethnic and gender equality, albeit within some limits. The campaign against religious belief and religious practice, while deeply offensive to believers, was viewed by communists as a positive value insofar as it aimed at uprooting what they considered superstition. It was, moreover, part and parcel of the Soviet endeavor to eliminate competing value systems and to forge an alternative modernity—a society that would be distinctively modern but in a way different from other modern societies. Moreover, one may mention that the Soviet social and economic system aspired to assure full employment, guaranteed pensions and free medical care, and created conditions for far less inequality of wages and other earnings than was (and is) found, for example, in the United States. To be a communist true believer was to be committed to a program of social and economic equality. Even art and music were to be harnessed to the project of promoting the communist paradise. Accordingly, the Soviets believed that there was no such thing as art for the sake of art, since art (including music) was always political; and if it seemed to abjure politics, then it was guilty of preaching abstention from the task of building socialism

or, worse, guilty of the escapism which the communists associated with what they called bourgeois capitalism.⁵³

For communists, the interests of the individual are realized within the scope of a project to realize the interests of the collective (as understood by the Communist Party, of course). This meant, in practice as well as in theory, that Soviet communists denied that individuals could have any interests distinct from those of the collective (except in trivial matters) and could not have any rights against the collective. This, in turn, entailed a curtailment of some freedoms, including in religion, aesthetic expression, speech, press, assembly, and travel.

While democratic systems have championed the rule of law, individual rights, tolerance, and respect for the harm principle,⁵⁴ fascist systems in the first half of the twentieth century, like neofascists today, championed rule by the leader and the priority of the collective over the interests and rights of individuals, defended intolerance of certain minority outgroups, and scorned the harm principle. Italian Fascism, thus, inverted the liberal democratic formula. For the (Italian) Fascist, it was the interests of the collective that had to remain supreme. Indeed, in an adaptation of Hegelian ideas, Fascists were convinced that the individual derived his worth, dignity, culture, and even freedom, from life in the collective and that the balance in which both individual and collective flourished (or could flourish) would be upset by emphasizing individual rights. Fascism rejected the Enlightenment heritage, which had given birth to democracy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and rejected both the idea of Natural Law (so important for John Locke and Thomas Jefferson alike) and the imperative of tolerance. Fascism also rejected the liberal-democratic notion of an objective reality which could be known and about which one could dispute, replacing it with the Actualist notion that our construction of reality is a product of collective subjectivity, so that it becomes impossible to speak of a reality existing outside the collective consciousness.⁵⁵ Under Fascism “the Italian people” over time came to think of themselves as a cultural and historical race (*stirpe*) and, as I shall note in chapter 3, the regime introduced antimiscegenation laws to discourage sexual liaisons between Italian men and Ethiopian women after the conquest of Ethiopia (or Abyssinia as it was often called at the time).

Fascism won followers on the basis of anger and extreme antisocialist patriotism. Some of the earliest Fascist converts were angry that Italy had been “deprived” of the territorial acquisitions it had hoped to gain as a result of its engagement in World War I. Italian Fascists were not just nationalists but also recoiled from the uncertain outcomes that are built into the democratic process. This desire for certainty was expressed in the slogan “The Duce is always right”—a principle that assured its believers of the absolute certainty of good leadership and of policies carried out in the interest of the collective. Where liberal-democrats praised the virtues of tolerance and respect for the harm principle, the Fascist state accepted that violence against enemies of Fascism was appropriate and praised the virtues of courage and readiness to fight for the nation. Fascism emerged as “an intensely politicized form of the modernist revolt against decadence,”⁵⁶ and aspired, one may say, to create an *alternative modernity*—among other things, by reconceptualizing the meaning of the past. Thus, as Roger Griffin has explained, the Italian Fascists’ “invocation of the glories of bygone eras had nothing to do with nostalgia: the past—Roman, Renaissance, risorgimento—was a reservoir of revitalizing myths needed to construct an alternative modernity for Italy.”⁵⁷ To be a Fascist was to believe in national destiny and to believe that governance was too important and required too much political understanding to be left to the masses. “The general voter,” as A. James Gregor has put it, summarizing the Fascist position, “tends to be ignorant of issues, uncertain of his or her interests, incompetent in dealing with them even if known, more comfortable in a disciplined environment that makes few demands on his or her limited capabilities, and, more often than not, subject to the moral suasion of articulate and self-possessed political leaders.”⁵⁸ What society needed therefore was a leader who could discern the needs of the society and know how to respond. Violence against those identified as misfits, freethinkers, liberals, or “enemies of the people” was seen by the Fascists as serving to cleanse society.

This general orientation naturally carried over into the arts, where Fascism held that music, architecture, and the other arts were weapons to be used in the struggle to build a Fascist society and to foster the specific notion of modernism, which Fascism nurtured. Carlo Carrà summarized

the Fascist point of view in these words: “We want Italian art to return to being orderly, methodical, disciplined, seeking to adopt definite, bodily form—form which both resembles and, because of the demands of the modern spirit, is different from that of the old masters.”⁵⁹ As a consequence, the arts in Fascist Italy were characterized by a sense of drama and scale, and by the promotion of heroism and devotion to il Duce.

Nazism, as a species of generic fascism, shared Italian Fascism’s commitment to construct an alternative modernity. Driven by a monomaniacal focus on race, the Nazis valued racial and cultural homogeneity, and sought to usher in “a new national culture and a new historical era.”⁶⁰ The Nazis rejected the Enlightenment heritage of rationality, equality, freedom, and individual rights. But they did not embrace pure irrationality, as is sometimes thought. Rather, they undertook “something perhaps more disturbing still,” as Griffin notes, namely, a “deadly serious attempt to realize an *alternative* logic, an *alternative* modernity, and an *alternative* morality to those [proposed] by liberalism, socialism, or conservatism.”⁶¹

The Nazis wanted to protect the purity of the race and this concern overrode all other concerns. One of the striking things about the Nazi experience was the undertaking to treat humanity as clay to be molded, shaped, and discarded at will. This undertaking underlay the Nazis’ twofold endeavor to sterilize or liquidate outright those whom they considered undesirable and to foster births on the part of those whose genetic material they considered desirable. Stalin decreed that genes were a bourgeois lie and that there was no such thing as genetic material,⁶² whereas the Nazis’ program of racial hygiene was built on the foundation of a certain understanding of genetics and expressed itself, among other things, in a law of 18 October 1935, banning marriages between persons with hereditary illnesses and healthy persons. In this spirit, Otmar von Verschuer, a trained geneticist, developed the notion of hereditary pathology, a notion that justified Nazi programs to eliminate hereditary pathological defects.⁶³

To understand how the Nazis were able to build their support among the German public, one has to keep the historical context in mind. Having lost World War I, many Germans were profoundly angered by the territorial settlement imposed through the 1919 Treaty of Versailles,

resented the treaty's assignment of exclusive war guilt to Germany, and were enraged by French occupation of the Saarland and the demilitarization of the Rhineland.⁶⁴ In addition, most if not all Germans were convinced that the reparations imposed by the Allies were unduly punitive and believed that they contributed to Germany's difficult economic situation in the 1920s and at the beginning of the 1930s. The Nazis addressed all of these concerns, winning support with their promises to bring about economic recovery and undo at least some of the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. Although these promises appealed to moderate Germans, other promises—of German expansion, of the removal of Jews from positions of responsibility, and of a return to traditional values—appealed only or largely to Germans on the political right. The Nazis were also sophisticated campaigners, tailoring their message according to the audience and thus playing down their anti-Semitism, for example, in those regions where locals were hostile to such messages.⁶⁵ Supporters of the Nazi party were diverse. Some of them hoped that the Nazis would restore the pre-Weimar social order, while others, especially young white-collar voters, as David Welch has pointed out, were attracted to Nazism because they believed that it would usher in a revolution that would establish a new social order. Nazi propaganda was also highly effective and appealed not only to irrational but also to rational instincts and concerns.⁶⁶

The Nazi system did not abolish the Weimar constitution or the Republic's various government ministries, but subverted the system from top to bottom. From the very beginning, parallel agencies were set up within the party apparatus, and Nazis were appointed in due course to serve either as deputies in the government ministries or as heads of those ministries. The Nazi system generated many laws, rules, regulations, and procedures, but it was not founded on the rule of law or on respect for procedural regularity. The Nazis also aspired to create an entirely new system of law, which would do away with all traces of liberal and democratic notions. Accordingly, "from the beginning the National Socialists placed great stock in the introduction of new terms in all spheres of life," and legislation came to include such hitherto unfamiliar expressions as "community of national comrades," "traffic community," "air raid protection community," and other terms alluding to the com-

munal bonds that tied the German people together.⁶⁷ This reorientation of legal terminology served as a signal of the Nazis' effort to erode protections for individual rights and shift the priority to communal interests, as defined by the Nazi Party. Nazism proved to be destructive of human life and dignity, targeting Jews, Roma, the physically infirm and mentally underdeveloped for liquidation, homosexuals for sterilization, and Slavs and "tramps" to be recruited into forced labor. In such a system, the law served not to protect people but to advance the interests of the state (or, as Hitler would have put it, of the race). Racialism also underpinned Nazi notions about art and culture; for the Nazis, art, music, film, and other cultural mediums could advance the "culture-creating mission of National Socialism" but it could also be degenerate.⁶⁸ The latter was thought to hold the potential to damage the national community and had, therefore, to be controlled or banned altogether. The Nazis also set about corrupting Christian teachings, as already mentioned, in order to give them an "Aryan" cast, and set up a German Christian Movement, as a Nazi transmission belt.⁶⁹ Indeed, just as in the Soviet case, there were no independent organizations operating in the Third Reich.

The anarchist critique of liberal democracy was, of course, different because of anarchists' unique opposition to the whole concept of state and authority. Among recent scholars, Robert C. North is emblematic of the anarchist approach. North argues in his book, *The World That Could Be*, that the rising incidence of violence over the decades and centuries is the result of the growth of the state apparatus; thus, building more prisons and adding more police cannot solve the problems they are supposed to address.⁷⁰ Among the classical anarchists, Peter Kropotkin provides one of the most comprehensive arguments for the anarchist vision. In *Mutual Aid*, he takes his cue from Charles Darwin, pointing out that, for Darwin, alongside the instinct to compete, resulting in the survival of the fittest, there exists a complementary instinct which Kropotkin calls "mutual aid." It is the instinct of creatures to assist one another, especially members of the same species. This, Kropotkin suggests, is sufficient for people to live in peace and harmony without armies, police, and institutions of repression.⁷¹ Neither Kropotkin nor other anarchists—among whom Mikhail Bakunin⁷² and Pierre-Joseph

Proudhon⁷³ were the most influential in their day—supposed that criminality would disappear with the state. But the anarchist argument is that state-enforced repression is not the only way to deal with the problem and that incarcerating criminals for fixed periods of time has not solved the problem of crime. Indeed, contemporary observers have pointed out that convicted criminals use their time in prison to exchange tips with fellow inmates and to refine their proficiency in criminal endeavors.

In the arts, anarchism influenced French symbolism and surrealism, and has typically figured as a philosophy of liberation also in the aesthetic realm. However, there have always been two strains of anarchism—one more collectivist and thus more akin to socialism, the other more “libertarian.” These two strains have fostered different concepts about the place and function of the arts.

Anarchists have been accused of being utopians, in their faith that one can actually create an ideal society. Perhaps there is some truth to the charge, and indeed this may account for some of anarchism’s continued attraction among scattered converts. In a nutshell, anarchists believe that the state, as it has existed, has always been a force for class domination and oppression, and that it is entirely possible for people to organize their affairs autonomously, at the local level, without creating institutional engines of coercion and force. The New England town meeting bears some relation to how an anarchist model might function. Anarchists argue that local grass-roots management of public affairs will produce better policies, result in less war, and afford people greater freedom and security in their lives. Anarchists also want to end exploitation and, in some cases, to establish industrial or agricultural collectives (as in Spain in the late 1930s⁷⁴). This vision is premised on a deep-seated faith that, freed of the state, human cooperation and mutual aid can triumph over greed and yearnings to dominate others. Anarchists, therefore, reject capitalism, which they understand cannot “dispense with organised government—or a privatised form of it.” Accordingly, “the philosophy of ‘anarcho-capitalism’ dreamed up by the ‘libertarian’ New Right, has nothing to do with Anarchism as known by the Anarchist movement proper.” What the New Right libertarians want, according to Albert Metzger, “is in fact a limited State—that is, one in which the State has one

function, to protect the ruling class, does not interfere with exploitation, and comes as cheap as possible for the ruling class.”⁷⁵

Spain’s anarchists championed freedom, and sought to replace the state with the self-organization of society. They were convinced that the collectivization of industry and agriculture was essential if human freedom was going to be reconciled with thoroughgoing equality.⁷⁶ They also viewed collectivization as empowering. For them, there was no inherent conflict between the rights and interests of the individual, and those of the collective. They championed social equality, rejected the conservative strictures of the Catholic Church, and sought to build a society premised on solidarity among its members. Although in a stateless society there can be neither law nor rule of law, they upheld a notion of the moral law, believing that any state structure was immoral to a greater or lesser degree and expecting the members of the society to defend their collective from the fascist rebels and to work to advance the common interests of the anarchist collective. Their moral vision embraced mutual aid, solidarity, and a commitment to social equality and tolerance. They viewed nationalism and fundamentalism of all kinds as threats to human freedom and solidarity.⁷⁷ Two further points should be noted in assessing the record of the Spanish anarchist experiment. The first is that it was made possible only by the fascist rebellion, which undermined the strength of the Republican government. The second is that, in the course of the three-year civil war, the anarchists became divided when some of their number decided to join the government as part of the ruling coalition; the more radical anarchists rightly noted that anarchism was supposed to be about rejecting government altogether and finding alternative ways of organizing society. If anarchists felt the need to join the government, does that raise questions about the staying power of anarchist collectives?

The alternatives to democracy analyzed in chapters 2–5—communism, Fascism, Nazism, and anarchism—all appealed to differing concepts of rights and duties. And, in each case, the hegemonic understanding of rights colored the regime’s attitude toward freedom of speech, of religion, of assembly, of expression in the arts, and of political activity. These sundry freedoms may be seen as a web of interlocking

freedoms, dependent for their specific operationalization on the hegemonic doctrine of rights.

Although one can speak sensibly of a Soviet vision of the future, a Fascist vision, a Nazi vision, and an anarchist vision—each of these postulating the possibility of fashioning an *alternative modernity*—one finds that advocates of each of these visions argued among themselves. These arguments sometimes centered on basic aspects of the vision, sometimes on policies seen as important to realizing the vision. For this reason, I have included sections on internal debates in each of the following four chapters. For example, in the Soviet case, the first of the four to be examined in this volume, Marx and Engels's vision of a dictatorship of the proletariat that would eventually wither away, leaving behind a stateless society, soon gave rise to debates among the leading Bolsheviks. The problem was that the radical policies adopted during the Civil War (1917–21), intended to promote the rapid transformation of society and even to accelerate the withering away of all structures of authority, soon ran into problems. The remedy that was approved at the 10th Party Congress in March 1921 was to embrace economic *laissez faire*, allowing a partial restoration of private enterprise, alongside other liberalizing measures. Those on the left wing of the party, usually called Left Bolsheviks, wanted to abandon this New Economic Policy as soon as possible (meaning once the economy had stabilized) and resume the project of transforming society by force if necessary. They also wanted to promote world revolution and even made two attempts to export the revolution to Germany. Those on the right wing of the party (Right Bolsheviks) thought that it made more sense to proceed cautiously, postponing the promotion of world revolution and encouraging economic transformation gradually, through persuasion rather than by force. By 1928, Stalin had emerged as the leader of the country and adopted the Left Bolshevik formula for the transformation of society but the Right Bolshevik approach in setting aside the advancement of world revolution for the foreseeable future. Twenty-five years later, a fresh debate about the vision of the future erupted, this time over the question of whether the Soviet Union was secure enough to finally place an emphasis on the production of consumer goods (a vision known as “goulash communism”) or rather to continue the Stalinist emphasis on

military-related and heavy industry (the advocates of which were called “metal-eaters”). In the short run, Khrushchev was able to push through a program of goulash communism, but under the General Secretaryship of Leonid Brezhnev (1964–82), stress was once more placed on heavy industry and armaments. Finally, by the end of the Brezhnev era, the system was clearly in economic trouble. The question was what to do about it. Mikhail Gorbachev, who became general secretary in March 1985, initially thought that the existing system could be reformed, but with time he gradually arrived at a new vision for the country, hoping to bring about a transition from a party-governed state to a law-governed state. There was resistance to this program both from radicals such as Boris Yeltsin, who thought that Gorbachev’s program did not go far enough, and from party conservatives, who thought that it went much too far. A small group of conservatives attempted to stage a coup in August 1991 but, when the coup attempt collapsed, the Soviet Union rapidly disintegrated.

The second case in this volume involves Fascist Italy. Here the pivotal debate in the period up to March 1926 was between those (such as Roberto Farinacci) who wanted to see the state subordinated to the party and those (such as Giuseppe Bottai) who wanted to see the party subordinated to the state; the latter group eventually prevailed. In addition, there were debates about such central issues as the role of women, the part that trade unions should play; the contribution expected of national literature; and party-state relations, with members who had joined the party coming over from the Italian National Association preferring to see the state apparatus dominant in the party-state relationship and the general secretaries of the Fascist Party wanting to see the party dominant in this relationship. But it was the passage of anti-Semitic legislation in 1938 that sparked the most serious debate within the elite, with anti-Semites such as Farinacci and Alberto Luchini applauding the regime’s embrace of racial anti-Semitism, and Fascist theorists such as Giovanni Gentile and Ugo Spirito deploring it, and arguing that “every form of assimilation was possible.”⁷⁸

The disagreements among Nazis (as related in more detail in chapter 4) were even more fundamental. Among various other disagreements, two stand out as especially important. The first was a dispute between

those who wanted the Third Reich to aspire to dominate the entire planet (as Hitler apparently wanted) and those who urged, on the contrary, that the Third Reich seek “merely” to dominate all of Europe. This debate became irrelevant when Germany lost World War II. The second dispute concerned whether to deport the Jews from German lands or to exterminate them. This second dispute remained unresolved until summer 1941, when the Nazis decided on the path of genocide. Another debate turned on what percentage of Jewish blood was sufficient to qualify a person as a Jew (one grandparent? or one great-grandparent?), while, in the cultural sector, there were turf wars between Joseph Goebbels and Alfred Rosenberg over the control of cultural policy.

Finally, chapter 5, devoted to anarchism in Spain, examines disputes among the anarchists. But here I have highlighted both external rivalries over visions and internal rivalry. By *external rivalries*, I mean rivalries between anarchists and nonanarchists and, in this connection, I contrast the anarchist vision of a secular society free of Church control with the Catholic Church’s vision of an “ideal” society, as well as with the Francoist vision, which overlapped to some extent with the Church’s vision. By *internal rivalry*, I mean the fundamental dispute within anarchist ranks concerning whether to accept posts in the government of the Republic—on the argument that all antifascist forces should unite in a common front—or to remain faithful to the anarchist vision and reject any and all forms of collaboration with the government. One of the things that emerge from this book, thus, is that, while each of these movements (in the first three cases, regimes) espoused and pursued a clear vision of an alternative future, there were nonetheless disputes among participants in each case concerning salient points.

This book comes to a close with a defense of liberal democracy, in which I point out the strengths and advantages of liberal democracy—chiefly the possibility to vote incumbents out of office, a higher level of legitimacy than enjoyed by any other regimes, better conditions for scientific and historical research, and, at least potentially or derivatively, the involvement of greater numbers of citizens in policymaking. But democratic governments have traditionally been vulnerable to certain complications, including corruption, referenda when people are misled, misinformed, or under-informed, frequent elections (resulting in office

holders tailoring the policies they favor for short-term gain and re-election), hate speech, and, in conditions of economic *laissez faire*, a vulnerability to corrode into plutocracy. The chapter closes with an account of the danger of democratic backsliding in new democracies, describing the cases of Hungary after May 2010 and Poland after October 2015, and in the United States, especially since Donald J. Trump took office as president in January 2017.

Liberal democracy is, of course, not just about procedures, as important as they are to ensuring predictability in law and policy and to protecting people's rights. Liberal democracy is also about certain values, perhaps in the first place the principle "live and let live," which is to say the counsel to accept others as they are, within the limits set by the harm principle (i.e., not to inflict harm on others except when it is necessary to defend oneself or a loved one or any innocent person, and only to the degree necessary to effect the defense). Liberal democracy also values *autonomy*, meaning that people can choose what to make of their lives, equal opportunity, nondiscrimination, and the basic freedoms of speech, assembly, press, and religion.

But just what is *democracy* anyway? Democracy has been defined as "a political system in which the formal and actual leaders of the government are chosen within regular intervals through elections based on a comprehensive adult franchise with equally weighted voting, multiple candidates, secret balloting, and other procedures, such as freedom of the press and assembly, that ensure real opportunities for electoral competition."⁷⁹ Philippe Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl offer a similar definition, adding the notion of accountability: "Modern political democracy," they write, "is a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives."⁸⁰ Michael Sodaro has defined democracy as "a system of government that consists of certain core values, [such as] the rule of law, popular sovereignty, guaranteed rights and liberties, and the economic well-being of the populace."⁸¹ And underlying all of these definitions is the notion, stressed by Norberto Bobbio, that democracy is about the rule of the majority.⁸² As James Madison and John Stuart Mill noted, there is a risk that majority rule, unless checked in some way,

might violate the rights of minorities. It was in this spirit that Joseph Schumpeter warned that “the will of the majority is [only] the will of the majority and not the will of ‘the people.’”⁸³ But there is something more: as Adam Przeworski has noted, a system may be considered democratic only if it is possible for one political party to displace another in power.⁸⁴ That elections and legislation operate, in democratic systems, according to the principle of majority rule is, as said, well known but, as Friedrich von Hayek has pointed out, the majoritarian principle has been understood in two alternative ways. Among those he called *liberal democrats*, democracy is understood as “a protective device for guaranteeing the rule of law ... [affording] a check on arbitrary rule by ensuring that the coercive power of the state is only employed for ‘ensuring obedience to rules of just conduct approved by most, or at least by a majority.’”⁸⁵ According to this understanding of democracy, majority opinion should be consulted, but legislators should not simply carry out whatever the majority wants or thinks it wants. By contrast, those whom Hayek calls *dogmatic democrats* believe that the will of the people should be seen as determinative of law. The dogmatics, sharing Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s faith in people’s judgment, encourage development of rule by a potentially “tyrannous majority” which, according to Hayek, could be “turned by degrees into a coercive and inefficient totalitarian regime.”⁸⁶ Among those whom Hayek would surely count as liberal democrats is Gus diZerega who, in 2001, urged that “the majority principle, important as it is, is secondary to safeguarding democratic procedures, which both include and limit that principle.”⁸⁷

Democracy—the term under which representative government is usually known—is thus about fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and freedom in art, with the slogan “art for art’s sake” generally respected. In democratic systems, in principle, art and music are neither assumed to have political messages nor expected to do so, although they are allowed to convey such messages. But, in practice, all of these rights and freedoms have been subject to debates, with some persons advocating that there should be no limits in such freedoms (the standpoint of libertarians), while others stress that religious practices, speech, and even art that inflict harm should not be tolerated in civilized society.

Perhaps the greatest risk with democratic systems has to do with the policy of *laissez faire*, which is typically associated with such systems, to the extent that *laissez faire* may open up the possibility for private persons to become hugely rich and, in that capacity, to subvert the political processes for their own ends. As Schumpeter has noted, “the capitalist process unavoidably attacks the economic standing ground of the small producer and trader ... The political structure of a nation is profoundly affected by the elimination of a host of small and medium-sized firms [Along the way,] the capitalist process pushes into the background all those institutions, the institutions of property and free contracting in particular, that expressed the needs and ways of the truly ‘private’ economic activity.”⁸⁸

Partly echoing John Stuart Mill, Robert Dahl has argued that representative government (democracy) can work only to the extent that people make rational and informed choices, which is not to say that they will necessarily see matters the same way.⁸⁹ The less informed and the less rational their choices, the less the resulting system will conform to rule “of the people, by the people, and for the people,” to cite Abraham Lincoln’s well-worn but nonetheless useful guide to understanding democracy.⁹⁰ For democratic theory to make sense, one must suppose that people, as individuals, are able to think or behave rationally. It is not necessary to assume that they actually do so, only that they have this capacity. Once rational capacity is granted, then the idea that citizens might elect their officials or even vote on certain measures placed before the public makes eminently good sense. Moreover, as rational beings, individuals have a legitimate claim to certain human and civic rights (with, of course, corresponding duties). It also follows that, in liberal democracy, the interests of the collective are not supposed to transcend completely the interests of individuals. By contrast, to be a Fascist was to believe in national destiny and to believe that governance was too important and required too much political understanding to be left to the masses. What society needed was a leader who could discern the needs of the society and know how to respond, and what was expected of the masses, thus, to quote the previously cited Fascist slogan was “to believe, to obey, to fight.” Indeed, violence against those identified as

misfits, freethinkers, liberals, or “enemies of the people” was seen by the Fascists as serving to cleanse society.

The attraction of these collectivist alternatives to democracy is not hard to identify. Anarchist collectives could seem profoundly empowering, even while relieving individuals of the need to make important decisions on their own. Where the totalitarian alternatives (fascism and communism) are concerned, there is the attraction of an escape from the responsibilities to decide one’s future in conditions of relative freedom.⁹¹ Then there was the excitement associated with what Griffin has called a “sense of a beginning” of a grand new era leading to a glorious future. Add to that the carefully stage-managed charisma of the three totalitarian leaders of the 1930s. Finally, there was the sheer spectacle of mass gatherings, such as the annual Nuremberg rallies held between 1923 and 1938,⁹² which conveyed a sense of magic and of endless possibilities which representative government cannot match. The point worth stressing is that the magic of totalitarian regimes consists in a magical packaging of unfulfillable promises, while the drabness of democratic governments lies in the sense of endless routine associated with efforts on the part of each party to promote policies which, in the end, might have to be subjected to compromise.

Notes

- 1 Willard A. Mullins, "Sartori's Concept of Ideology: A Dissent and an Alternative," in *Public Opinion and Political Attitudes*, ed. Allen R. Wilcox (New York: Wiley, 1974), as quoted in John Gerring, "Ideology: A Definitional Analysis," *Political Research Quarterly*, vol. 50, no. 4 (December 1997), 958.
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CHAPTER 2

An Evolving Vision of an Alternative Modernity: Soviet Communism

Communism was born out of outrage at the treatment of working class people in capitalist systems, treatment that deprived workers of the education, leisure, and wherewithal to develop creative pursuits, as well as adequate nutrition sufficient to live healthy lives. Communism in practice looked quite different from communism in theory, but the principle that the interests of the collective took priority over those of the individual was a constant, though it was claimed that the individual would benefit. Social and economic equality was stressed and, in Stalin's hands, this became associated with the drive to reduce not only economic differences but also linguistic, religious, and ethnic differences, via processes of linguistic Russification, atheization, and the merging of nationalities into a Soviet people. This also meant that the state was anything but neutral in matters of religion.

*Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, communism's founders, offered a vision of an alternative modernity in which the state and religion would wither away over time, ethnic distinctiveness would lose salience, the nuclear family would be abolished, with child-rearing taken over by the collective, and the division of labor made flexible, so that, in a memorable passage from *The German Ideology*, a person could "hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner," without ever being locked into the role of hunter, fisherman, cattle-raiser, or critic. But there were tensions within the Marxist corpus between the humanistic aspects of their thought (moderating the division of labor, overcoming alienation, ending exploitation) and the authoritarian aspects of their formula (the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the need for central control of both the revolutionary party and the socialist regime), as well as between the determinist and voluntarist currents running through their thought.*

Lenin overcame the first of these tensions, by emphasizing the authoritarianism in the Marxist formula, and simplifying it in the process. But the tension, even contradiction, between Marx's determinist prediction that the proletarian revolution would come when and only when economic conditions were ripe, and his voluntarist predilection that workers should unite in a revolutionary party to throw off their chains remained unresolved until 1928. Between 1917 and 1927, Left Bolsheviks and Right Bolsheviks argued back and forth. Left Bolsheviks were voluntarists and wanted to accelerate history by forcible measures on the home front and by organizing to export the revolution. Right Bolsheviks were determinists and adopted the more moderate position that the collectivization of agriculture, for example, did not need to be forced but would occur naturally, if gradually, if the regime would merely wait. They also favored putting other measures to transform society, together with the world revolution, on the back burner. This second tension, indeed contradiction, was resolved with Josif Stalin's victory by 1928. With that, the regime subscribed to a revised vision, shorn of tensions and contradictions, which was "leftist" on the domestic front and "rightist" in postponing world revolution.

With the passage of the 1936 constitution, the regime headed by Stalin claimed to have achieved socialism, and described the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) as a state of workers and peasants. Stalin nonetheless continued to claim that the Soviet state was withering away. Four decades later, during the general secretaryship of Leonid Brezhnev, a new constitution was adopted, which invented a new historical stage of "developed socialism" (not mentioned by Marx, Engels, Lenin, or Stalin). It described the USSR as a "state of all the people," and, by doing so, abandoned the Marxist-Leninist precept that every state exists above all to protect and advance the interests of the ruling class at the expense of other classes. For Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, thus, there was no such thing as a "state of all the people." However this formula in the 1977 constitution might be described, it would be hard to describe it as classic Marxism-Leninism. Moreover, it also deferred the withering away of the state—a central element in the Marxist-Leninist vision of an alternative modernity—to the indefinite future.

Mikhail Gorbachev, who in 1985 assumed the office of general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), took the revision of the vision even further, promoting a program of glasnost (calling for greater

availability of reliable information and better access for scientific research) and *perestroika* (meaning an overhaul of the economy and political apparatus, raising standards of quality), among other things. Over time, Gorbachev allowed a critical reexamination of Soviet history, liberalized religious policy (for example, relegalizing the Ukrainian Eastern-Rite Catholic Church and granting legal registration to the Hare Krishna community), and by 1990 was even advocating competitive elections. This entailed nothing less than the complete and final abandonment of any remnant of the Marxist-Leninist vision of an alternative modernity. He was criticized both by more liberal elements, who felt he was not pushing reform fast enough, and by more conservative elements, who felt that he was moving too far, too fast. Leading conservatives eventually launched a coup, in an attempt to remove Gorbachev and restore a Leninist system. When the coup failed, the disintegration of the Soviet Union gathered steam, and the liberals, led by Russian president Boris Yeltsin, became ascendant for the time being. By December 1991, the Soviet Union and, with it, the Marxist-Leninist vision of an alternative modernity were dead.

Democratic systems are founded on the premises that a diversity of interests may be legitimate and that people enjoy a right to privacy. But the communist system that functioned in the Soviet Union during much of the twentieth century was premised on the claims that there was only one legitimate interest and that there was no right to privacy. The assertion of a single legitimate interest also meant, in practice, the narrowing of freedom to utterly trivial matters and the elevation of the will of the party and its leader over the rule of law. Because the “construction of communism” and the consolidation and maintenance of party control took priority over all else, cultural artifacts including music and art were subjected to censorship and control; dissident artists and writers risked incarceration if their work was discovered. In the early years of Soviet history, the legitimate interests of the proletariat (the working class) were seen as threatened by the illegitimate interests of the rich peasants, the clergy, and the remnants of the bourgeoisie. By the end of the first Five-Year Plan (1928–32), there were no rich peasants, as their land had been collectivized and their lives placed under the control of the party, the clergy had been tamed and coopted, and the bourgeoisie had been crushed. With this, the idea that the Soviet state was a workers’ state gave way, by the 1960s (which is to say, some years after Stalin’s death in

1953), to the idea that it was a state “of the whole people”—an innovation in terms of Marxist theory.

The Soviet system was constructed on a foundation of organizational monopoly, control, and planning, and although the communists held out the promise of equality, this did not apply to those in the upper echelons of power. Control and planning were the fundamental elements of the system. The Communist Party used an extensive system of secret police and informants to maintain surveillance on society and censorship to prevent ideas which it considered dangerous from reaching the public. So important was control that, in the agricultural sphere, the Soviets preferred state farms, where the farmers worked as employees of the state and which were the least productive, to collective farms, where the collective farmers enjoyed some limited autonomy, and preferred collective farms to private farms or private plots, even though private farms and plots were the most productive. Nonetheless, as this chapter will make clear, Soviet strategies of control evolved over the decades.

THE VISION AND THE REALITY

The communists inherited from Karl Marx a confidence that the tension between individual interests and the interests of the collective could be overcome, and from Vladimir Ilyich Lenin a belief that true equality could only be accomplished in conditions of a dictatorship of the proletariat, in effect justifying a dictatorship by the Communist Party. Although the Soviet communists demanded conformity in many spheres of life, with programs of Russification, atheization, and Sovietization designed to promote conformity in language, (anti)religion, and political culture, they argued that this was also the route to achieving a higher grade of freedom than was afforded in democratic-capitalist countries. Conceived as a utopian project, to perfect society and even create a New Soviet Man and a New Soviet Woman, Soviet communism was generally intolerant of alternative values or formulas in culture and art and, at the height of the Stalin era, imposed an aesthetic formula known as *socialist realism* on literary creators, artists, and composers of music alike.

Although the Soviet Union was ruled by the CPSU, that party never claimed that “communism” as such had been attained, whether in that

country or anywhere else. The Marxist-Leninist scheme argued that, after the revolution, there would be a period of *dictatorship of the proletariat*, during which the Communist Party would lead the way in *building socialism*. Socialism was defined in terms of eliminating antagonistic differences, while recognizing that differences of interests would continue to exist. Socialism also involved the existence of socialist law and the necessity of a government and was routinely described as operating according to the principle, “from each according to his ability, to each according to his contribution.” Once socialism had been attained, however, then the process of *building communism* could begin. During this phase, the state (which is to say the government together with its administrative apparatus) would gradually wither away; however, there were few, if any communists, who thought that the Communist Party should wither away. Communism was understood to be a system operating according to the principle, “from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.”¹ There would be no government, as such, once communism was achieved.

Communism is the name by which the system created in Russia after 1917 came to be known. Its typical features were a single-party dictatorship, an organizational monopoly (meaning that no club or society or association could exist which was not linked with the Communist Party), party control of the mass media (with extensive censorship), party control of the economy, an extensive surveillance system making use of secret police and a wide net of informers, and close monitoring and control of religious life. At its peak in the early 1980s, communism had spread to sixteen countries—the Soviet Union (from 1917), Mongolia (from 1922), China (from 1949), North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea, Cuba, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania. As of 1980, more than 1.5 billion people, or about one-third of the world’s population, lived in communist states. But beginning with the appearance of an independent trade union in Poland in 1980 and the development of cooperative ties among dissidents, communism began to erode. Beginning in 1989, the East European countries abandoned their communist systems and, for that matter, communist rule in the Soviet Union ended effectively also in 1989. However, the Soviet Union continued to exist

for another two years, being dismantled only at the end of 1991. By 2012, there were only four communist systems left in the world—North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Cuba. In China, although the Communist Party has remained in power, maintaining its political monopoly, a capitalist system has been allowed to develop.

Needless to say, Lenin and his associates did not try to win converts by promising them a system of social control, organizational monopoly, planning, agricultural collectivization, and extensive surveillance. His original wartime slogan was “Peace, land, bread!” Beyond that, the Bolsheviks held out the vision of an egalitarian society, and it was this promise of equality that attracted converts. Naturally, there were also those who joined the party out of opportunism, as well as others motivated in the first place by hatred of the old tsarist system and the core Bolsheviks themselves who, during much of the 1920s, would argue back and forth about whether to prioritize control and planning or to prioritize economic recovery and prosperity. Economic equality was to be realized—in theory—by regulating both prices and wages, controlling the housing market, and, most important, eliminating private property in land and economic enterprises. In communist systems, the Communist Party controlled the means of production and set economic targets through a system of medium-term and long-term planning, typically involving five-year plans. The prices of public transportation, basic foodstuffs, and plain clothes were low; the prices of more fashionable clothes and other goods classified as luxury goods, if they were available at all, were comparatively high, whereas goods imported from the West were typically sold in shops operating only on hard currency. Since working-class people were paid in local currency, that meant that the goods on sale in hard currency shops were not available to them. In this way, the quest for justice defined as equality created elements of a rigid class system. Yet, in the early years of the Bolshevik state, young working-class radicals wanted to achieve equality overnight. Young students and young workers set up communes, in which they “could actually fulfill their naïve dreams of a communist society featuring common property and the supremacy of the collective over the individual, which could go so far as determining decisions over marriage and abortion.”²

Communists sought to control culture through support of those cultural producers who supported the system, through the manipulation of cultural products, or through censorship. In a classic, albeit extreme, example, it is well known that Stalin would personally screen films being produced in the Soviet Union and would usually demand that there be changes to certain scenes, to the musical score, even to the way in which one or another actor portrayed a certain character. Even the celebrated film director Sergey Eisenstein would be “corrected” by Stalin on details of his film scripts.³

Communists were also typically hostile toward religion, although there was considerable variation in this area. The harshest policy toward religion was in Albania where, in 1967, all places of worship were shut down and religion was declared illegal. The Soviet Union (especially in the Stalin era) also persecuted religion, as did communist China, for example. But in other states, such as the German Democratic Republic (or East Germany, as it was commonly called) and the People’s Republic of Poland, the picture was more mixed. In East Germany, for example, Churches were allowed to operate hospitals and homes for the aged, to maintain theological faculties at the universities, and even to permit independent peace movements to use their premises to organize antiregime protests. In communist-era Poland, the Catholic Church was able to operate a university and, especially after 1970, enjoyed a wide latitude for independent action, even if much of it was in a legal grey area.

Soviet communism lasted less than a century and, in that sense, may be said to have failed. It failed for several reasons. To begin with, the Communist Party was not able to deliver on its promise of equality. Although the range of wages was narrower than in Western countries, those excluded from the privileges of the party elite resented the broken promise. Another reason was that, except in Yugoslavia, the communists generally did not allow their citizens to travel freely and, over time, this generated huge frustration. Again, the various controls, involving censorship, surveillance, persecution, and, in the Soviet Union, the use of psychiatric clinics to lock up persons who criticized the system (discussed below), only served to drive people into opposition. In such a system, even such simple things as dyeing one’s hair blue or wearing a “New York City Police” sweatshirt or listening to the wrong kind of rock

music or listening to Radio Free Europe could get one in trouble with the authorities; in such a system, every action was potentially political. In restaurants, dry cleaners, shops, even discotheques, the managers would typically hang up the portrait of the General Secretary of the Communist Party. In such a system, caution and opportunism were more important factors than loyalty or ambition.

Communism failed for two more fundamental reasons. The first of these is that the communists failed to convince people who lived in the countries they controlled that the communist system was legitimate. The second is that the communist systems in most cases, and especially in the Soviet Union, proved to be economically dysfunctional. In this chapter, I examine how communism functioned in the Soviet Union, taking stock in particular of how the goal of equality figured in Marxism-Leninism and in Soviet practice, and also of some divergent tendencies among the communists themselves.

ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SOVIET SYSTEM

During the Soviet era, political scientists offered a number of rival models in an effort to understand the nature of the communist system. The “classic” model, developed by Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski in their 1956 volume, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, argued—as Hannah Arendt had argued earlier⁴—that communism and fascism were “basically alike,” though they hastened to add that this meant that they were “not wholly alike.”⁵ For Friedrich and Brzezinski, the totalitarian syndrome involved six traits or features: an official ideology, a one-party system with that party typically led by a single individual, a terroristic police, state monopolies of communications and weapons, and a centrally planned and directed economy.⁶ Although they did not list the antireligious drive as essential to totalitarianism, they acknowledged that this was a central characteristic of Soviet communism.⁷

The totalitarian model remained the dominant paradigm among Sovietologists until the mid-1960s, when two articles published in *World Politics* called for a rethinking of the model. The first of these, written

by Allen Kassof, was intended to address the changes that had occurred in the Soviet Union in the decade following Stalin's death in 1953 and offered a theory of the Soviet Union as an *administered society*, which he called "a variant of modern totalitarianism, with the important difference that it operates by and large without resort to those elements of gross irrationality (in particular, the large-scale and often self-defeating use of psychological terror and physical coercion as basic means of social control) that we have come to associate with totalitarian systems in recent decades."⁸ Kassof further defined the administered society as "one in which an entrenched and extraordinarily powerful ruling group lays claim to ultimate and exclusive scientific knowledge of social and historical laws and is impelled by a belief not only in the practical desirability, but [also in] the moral necessity of planning, direction, and coordination from above."⁹

The second article to address the issue of how to conceptualize Soviet politics had an even bigger impact. This was H. Gordon Skilling's article, "Interest Groups and Communist Politics," which noted that the totalitarian model largely excluded any notion of anything resembling interest group activity and then proceeded to offer some evidence of such activity in communist systems.¹⁰ This was followed by publication of the landmark collection in 1971, *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics*, edited by H. Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths.¹¹ The volume brought together chapters dealing with the party apparatchiki, the security police, the military, industrial managers, economists, writers, and jurists. Skilling summed up the findings of the assembled authors to suggest that, in the Soviet context, "perhaps all groups pursue both narrow group interests *and* broader public interests and values, as well as articulating the interests and values of other social groups."¹² "All groups," he added, "without exception, seek to use the media of communications and to influence the views of the leaders, higher circles, and the public at large."¹³ That book was possibly the most widely discussed volume dealing with the Soviet Union of the decade.

Inevitably, the Skilling-Griffiths collaboration provoked a reaction. Without denying that the groups mentioned by the contributors to the volume edited by Skilling and Griffiths sought to articulate their interests, some authors, such as William E. Odom, argued that the totalitarian

model remained the most useful prism through which to view Soviet politics. In Odom's view, the totalitarian model "emphasizes what is truly important in Soviet politics: a high degree of centralized power, with policy initiative wholly reserved for the center."¹⁴ In a follow-up article, published sixteen years later (just months after the USSR had collapsed), Odom reiterated that "The totalitarian model has far more analytical utility than its competitors, which is not to deny that the others have yielded insights." This, Odom argued, was because "the totalitarian model captures critical features of the system that tend to get pushed aside by other models."¹⁵

A third approach to understanding Soviet reality was the national character school, which tied Russian political behavior to long-standing historically rooted patterns. The classic work in this genre is Geoffrey Gorer and John Rickman's *The People of Great Russia*, first published in 1949 and reissued in 1962.¹⁶ In his portion of the book, Gorer speculated that the way in which Russian babies were swaddled, leaving them tied into bundles and being released from this "captivity" only occasionally, impressed upon Russians certain personality traits that lasted throughout their lives. He further postulated a direct link from traditional patterns of confession before an Orthodox priest, in which the priest recited a litany of sins to which the penitent allegedly felt obliged to confess, and the confessions exacted from the various "Old Bolsheviks" arrested on Stalin's orders in the 1930s. Few, if any, Sovietologists were convinced by this approach and viewed it, at best, as an interesting curiosity.

Then there was the bureaucratic model, associated with Alfred G. Meyer's claim that one could "compare the corporate structure of the USSR with a Western corporation" and that "as a giant industrial bureaucracy, Soviet society is governed by the principle of careerism ... Upward mobility is an accepted value."¹⁷ Moreover, while Friedrich and Brzezinski had argued that Soviet leaders "continued to attach considerable importance to ideology," which "plays a significant part in Soviet life,"¹⁸ Meyer contended, on the contrary, that "the function of ideology is to legitimize the system," which it does "by veiling unpleasant features of the system in a fog of magical formulas."¹⁹ What should be understood here is that Friedrich and Brzezinski understood ideology one way—I surmise as the written record of lessons learned from political experience

and as responses to specific crises—while Meyer understood ideology a different way.

A fifth approach, championed by Darrell Hammer, is the oligarchical model, which took a commonsensical approach by pointing out that, after Stalin's death, power was dispersed among a small number of power-brokers in the CPSU's upper echelons. In addressing the question of ideology, Hammer pointed out that "Every modern political system has an ideology which is a basic component of the political culture. The ideology influences the way in which people relate to authority and the way in which political decision makers approach their problems."²⁰ Concerning socialization—again, a feature of every modern political system—Hammer summarized the basic lessons communicated to children, namely "respect for authority ... [and] the role of the collective in setting standards and regulating social behavior. From earliest childhood, the Soviet citizen is taught to identify with a group."²¹ Like Skilling and Griffiths, Hammer found evidence of bureaucratic groups that enjoyed "some degree of independence from the party" and displayed interests of their own on policy matters.²²

Still another approach is to see the Soviet system, and its Stalinist incarnation in particular, as an example of the European Enlightenment pushed to the limit. In Martin McCauley's words,

Stalinist socialism was a child of the Enlightenment. It was an attempt to fashion a new, just and prosperous society on earth. It was inspired by European secular thinkers such as Hegel and Kant ... Marx's "antagonistic contradictions" (groups which opposed the greater good of society) would be overcome in order to produce a conflict-free, harmonious society. In order to do this, purification was necessary. Those who could not, or would not, contribute to the building of the new [society] were classified as "yesterday's people." As such they had to be exterminated.²³

Another advocate of this model is Stephen Kotkin; in his view, Stalinism can best be understood as derived from eighteenth-century ideas of creating a rational social order. Thus, for Kotkin, "Stalinism was not an anomaly resulting from Stalin's evilness, Russia's social backwardness,

or Marxist ideology. Instead the Soviet Union under Stalin embodied, more than any other country, the elements of ‘progressive modernity’—a coordinated, purposeful economy and a government of national unity dedicated to the well-being of the population and country as a whole.”²⁴ In a bold statement of his thesis, Kotkin asserts that “rather than being viewed as a pathological case . . . , the USSR in a narrative of the welfare state might appear as the standard whose uncanny success challenged the rest of the world to respond.”²⁵

Other models that have been advocated to account for Soviet political behavior include the Russian imperial model, associated with Richard Pipes, which points to historical inertia and continuities in institutions, interests, and behaviors from the tsarist era to the communist era. For example, the NKVD-KGB could be traced back to the reign of Emperor Peter the Great (1672–1725; reigned as tsar and then as emperor, 1682–1725), who founded a secret police to carry out espionage and special operations, or even further back in time to the Oprichnina of Ivan the Terrible (1530–1584; reigned as grand prince of Muscovy [1533–47] and as tsar [1547–84]).

Finally, there is an approach that may be found in Robert C. Tucker’s *Soviet Political Mind*,²⁶ which understands the Soviet Union as an example of a *revolutionary mass movement regime*, thus placing it in a comparative category that includes noncommunist mass movement regimes such as Gamal abd al-Nasser’s regime in Egypt and Muammar al-Qaddafi’s regime in Libya. Revolutionary mass movement regimes are characterized by a single party operating on the basis of ideology and laying claim to a monopoly of power; the mobilization of citizens in politics through orchestrated and controlled participation; a drive to transform attitudes, values, and behaviors—thus, the political culture of the society—through terror if necessary; and a cohesive program of political, economic, and social modernization. Given the focus on modernization, it follows necessarily that one may speak of a series of phases that may be typical. In the Soviet case, these phases were *system destruction*, involving the destruction of the old regime and an effort to wipe out old ways; *system building*, involving the consolidation of power and the penetration by the regime into society, with major changes in economic, social, religious, and political life; *system maintenance*, when institutions and

procedures are stabilized and there are no further efforts at effecting major changes in society; and *system decay or rejuvenation*, with the latter involving programs of reform of the system.²⁷ By the end of the Brezhnev era, there were clear signs of system decay but Gorbachev hoped to rejuvenate the system; eventually he realized that the existing system could not be rejuvenated, only changed. This chapter is implicitly built on the foundation of this last-mentioned approach to Soviet politics.

THE MARXIST VISION

The revolution that came to Russia in 1917 was inspired by the ideas of Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), revolutionary intellectuals who developed a theory that interpreted all state formations as instruments of specific class interests, and called for the overthrow of bourgeois capitalism and its replacement by a system that would defend the interests of the working class. Marx was a key figure in the International Workingmen's Association, also known as the First International (1864–1876), and, through various writings, he and his collaborator Engels promoted their ideas and inspired revolutionaries across Europe. In February 1848, Marx and Engels issued *The Communist Manifesto*, in which they warned that "Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: bourgeoisie and proletariat."²⁸ As they saw it, the bourgeoisie, which is to say the ruling class, built its economic and political power by oppressing the working class: in their view, "hitherto every form of society has been based ... on the antagonism of oppressing and oppressed classes,"²⁹ which is why human history was, for Marx and Engels, the history of the class struggle. People were not valued for themselves but rather, the bourgeoisie "resolved personal worth into exchange value,"³⁰ which is to say how much a person could work or how much a person earned. They declared their "immediate aim" as "formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, [and] conquest of political power by the proletariat."³¹ The eventual proletarian state would then, they demanded, bring about the confiscation of private landholdings by the state, state control of all

means of transportation, central planning in industry and agriculture, the organization of industrial workers along military lines, and free and universal publication education for all children.³² The manifesto also called for the abolition of marriage and family and their replacement by “an openly legalized community of women,” and “the abolition of bourgeois individuality, bourgeois independence, and bourgeois freedom.”³³

Many readers of the works of Marx and Engels have been struck by their vision of an alternative modernity. In their view, the division of labor, based on specialization and skills, risked dehumanizing people. They believed that, to overcome that dehumanization, which was marked also by deep alienation, it was necessary to loosen the bonds associated with the division of labor. As they wrote in a striking passage in *The German Ideology*,

As soon as the distribution of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming [a] hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.³⁴

But as long as the state treats people as subjects, sustaining a system of socioeconomic and thus also political inequality, there is no freedom. The solution was to reverse the relationship between state and society. As Marx put it in *Critique of the Gotha Program*, “Freedom consists in transforming the state from an agency superior to society into one thoroughly subordinated to it.”³⁵

Under capitalism, in which the dominant ideas were the ideas of the ruling class, workers were exploited and alienated. For Marx and Engels, only a workers’ revolution held any hope that a just socioeconomic order could be achieved or at least approximated. But a proletarian revolution

was feasible only in a country which had achieved an advanced stage of capitalism and, Engels wrote, it had to be organized and directed by a vanguard party. Once successful, Marx and Engels held, there would be a transition period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in which the Communist Party would wage war against surviving bourgeois elements. Once the period of class war was over, the dictatorship of the proletariat would melt away and society would arrive at the stage of socialism. But socialism, too, was only a transitional stage and, under socialism, the state would gradually wither away, as ordinary people would assume responsibilities for the services and functions hitherto performed by the state. Once the state had completely withered away, the now-communist system would operate without coercion.³⁶ But they warned, in *The German Ideology*, “Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, [or] an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things.”³⁷

THE LENINIST REVISION OF THE MARXIST VISION

Among the admirers of Marx and Engels was Georgi Valentinovich Plekhanov (1856–1918), who founded the Group for the Liberation of Labor, the first Marxist initiative organization in Russia in 1883. By the following year, this group had given birth to the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. By 1887, this party had its second program, drawn up by Plekhanov. The program pledged to work for “the complete emancipation of labour from the yoke of capital” and promised that the eventual “communist revolution will give rise to the most radical changes in the whole constitution of social and international relationships.”³⁸ Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov “Lenin” (1870–1924), who had already been exiled to Siberia for revolutionary activity, joined the small group of émigré revolutionaries led by Plekhanov after his release from exile in early 1900 and, at the end of the same year, the party launched an underground newspaper, *Iskra* (the Spark) which was printed in Leipzig and smuggled into Russia. The editorial board consisted of Plekhanov, Lenin, Iulius Osipovich Martov, and three other Russian Marxists.

By 1903, Lenin was going his own way and, at the party's Second Congress in the summer of 1903, broke with Plekhanov and Martov (1873–1923) over questions of strategy. Lenin quarreled with Plekhanov because of the latter's view that capitalism was just being established in Russia and that the working class might therefore cooperate, in the short run, with the bourgeoisie to overthrow the absolutist monarchy. Lenin argued—not only against Plekhanov but also against Marx and Engels—that capitalism was already dominant in Russia and that the proletariat should therefore organize to overthrow both capitalism and absolutism, which is to say to repudiate any collaboration with bourgeois political parties. Where Martov is concerned, he championed an open party, which would welcome all comers and which would collaborate with trade unions, cooperatives, and village councils in mounting resistance to the tsarist government; Lenin, by contrast, championed a revolutionary concept with membership controlled and restricted to committed militants, and advocated the violent overthrow of the tsarist government. The upshot of the Second Congress was that Lenin's bloc broke with Martov's bloc, with Lenin calling his group the *bolsheviki* (or “those in the majority”).

Lenin's ideas represented a stretching of Marx's ideas, since Marx had thought that proletarian revolution, as he called it, would have its best prospects when a society had attained a highly developed capitalist economy. Russia in 1917 did not yet have a capitalist economy; in many ways, it was still semi-feudal. What Lenin proposed to do, thus, was to telescope economic development and revolutionary transformation into a single process, to be managed by the Bolshevik Party. Lenin's justification was that, precisely by virtue of its underdevelopment, Russia was the weakest link in the capitalist chain and, thus, the ideal place to begin the world revolution.

At the same time, Lenin simplified Marx's ideas, in the process designing his own vision of an alternative reality. This is especially the case where the themes of alienation and equality are concerned. *Alienation*—manifested both as estrangement from others and as self-alienation—was a central concern for Marx, who traced its origins to the coercion, which he believed was attendant on private property and the division of labor. In spite of their ruminations about the shepherd/

poet/critic in *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels did not believe that the division of labor could reasonably be abolished.³⁹ But they remained committed to the abolition of private property in land, industrial plants, capital stock, and so forth. Lenin, and for that matter Stalin as well, paid little, if any, attention to alienation, but their commitment to eliminate private property, including in Stalin's case at least also private farming, can scarcely be doubted. For Lenin and Stalin, the desire to control society was a more important motivation in this regard than overcoming alienation.

When we turn to *equality*, we find that, even while deploring class inequalities and economic exploitation, Marx expressed some reservations about the *concept*, at least, of equality. Hence, in *Critique of the Gotha Program*, he concluded that “*equal right* is still—at least in principle—a *bourgeois right* ... [T]his *equal right* is continually beset with bourgeois limitations.”⁴⁰ Hence, looking ahead to the eventual proletarian revolution, which he anticipated would be waged for the sake of greater equality, Marx foresaw that the incipient communist society would, in every respect, be “stamped with the birthmarks of the old society.”⁴¹ Eventually, as society would attain a more sophisticated understanding of communist justice—all systems of justice being derivative from and supportive of the respective societies in which they arise—“only then can the limited horizon of bourgeois right be wholly transcended...”⁴² What communism would signify, as Marx and Engels explained in *The German Ideology* and as Marx explained in *Critique of the Gotha Program*, was the complete liberation of people both collectively and individually, the unleashing of individuals' creativity, an end to external constraints on that creativity, and the transformation of “the state from an agency superior to society” into an instrument whereby people administered society, which Marx viewed as the fundamental prerequisite of *freedom*.⁴³ Marx recognized that “oppression ... may thrive on *formal* equality,”⁴⁴ but sought to achieve *substantial* equality through the abolition of classes. Thus, as Kai Nielsen has noted, “Marx and Engels, as heirs to the Enlightenment, were committed to a belief in equality.”⁴⁵

Lenin, who read the writings of Marx and Engels with great care, initially shared their view of what a communist society would look like in its early stages. It would, Lenin predicted, be nothing else than “the

bourgeois state without the bourgeoisie.”⁴⁶ Following in Marx’s footsteps, Lenin too commended the Paris Commune—in his 1917 pamphlet, *State and Revolution*—for having introduced an egalitarian wage system. But Lenin went much further than Marx in actually calling for the immediate organization of the economy on the basis of the virtual equality of all wages.⁴⁷ Despite that declaration, Lenin never entirely carried that principle into practice, and to the extent that he did so, the policy collapsed. By April 1918, Lenin found himself defending the contrary principle, that persons with technical ability or particular skills should be paid higher salaries than ordinary workers.⁴⁸ But the Bolsheviks did not lose sight of their egalitarian goal. In September 1920, the Ninth All-Russian Conference of the Communist Party passed a resolution pledging to “work out really effective practical measures for the removal of inequality (in the conditions of life, earnings and other similar matters) between ‘specialists’ and other responsible workers, on the one hand, and the mass of the [ordinary] workers on the other.”⁴⁹ If, as Stalin would claim in 1931, the demand for equality in conditions of *socialism* was un-Marxist and un-Leninist,⁵⁰ once the state would wither away and *communism* would be achieved, equality would consist not in arithmetically equal wages, but in the equal possibility for each person to obtain whatever she or he needed, even if that would amount to, let us say, twice as much as what someone else needed.

Insofar as private property—the foundation stone of economic inequality—depended on coercion for its continuance, coercion should be seen as a basic pillar of (inegalitarian) capitalist society. But Lenin and Stalin both understood that, to the extent that coercion, whether “soft” or “hard” was needed to resolve conflicts in society as well as to maintain established patterns of ownership, then, if one was to eliminate coercion from society—in theory—one should eliminate not only private ownership of property, but also other potential sources of conflict. Clearly, in any society, there can be conflicts not just over property rights or concerning economic injustice, but also concerning other matters, such as religious differences, differences of language and national culture, and even differences in the way women and men are treated. The homogenization of society would, however, not only reduce (though not eliminate) the incidence of serious internal conflict, but also render

society easier to control. In the religious sphere, the closing or destruction of large numbers of churches, the taming of the hierarchy, the systematic mockery of religious doctrines and relics, the activities of the League of Militant Atheists, and the promotion of atheism in other ways all served to advance the objective of moving, however slowly, to a future in which there would be a general, if perhaps imperfect, consensus about what to make of religious claims. And with that, internal conflict over religious matters would become a thing of the past, and the potential for inequality arising from religious differences would be eliminated.

Much the same kind of thinking underpinned Soviet nationalities policy. Soon after the October Revolution, Lenin declared his conviction that “the proletariat ... strives to bring the nations closely together, to fuse them.”⁵¹ Somewhat later, in *Foundations of Leninism*, Stalin explicitly demanded “the amalgamation of nations.”⁵² This fusing (*sliyanie*) or amalgamation was, in fact, actively pursued through an interrelated set of policies embracing Russification, the promotion of interethnic marriage, and Sovietization, all of which were intended to give rise to a *Soviet people* who would think of themselves as one people. Moreover, to the extent that Russian was becoming ever more important as the lingua franca of the Soviet Union, non-Russian languages would—it was thought—come to be seen as provincial. This, in turn, would have the result that scholars, politicians, scientific workers, and other members of the elite would prefer to speak Russian rather than some other language, and to refine their Russian, rather than polish their command of other Soviet languages.

Even in the sphere of gender, some amalgamation was possible where gender roles were concerned. In place of the “traditional family” in which the wife stayed home to take care of the children and the house, while her husband went to work, the Soviet regime encouraged women to join the labor force, constructing childcare centers to make this possible. In this way, gender role differentiation was somewhat reduced, although Soviet women still took care of the bulk of the housework and shopping.

The logic of the Marxist-Leninist approach to equality, thus, was as follows: alienation arises from inequality (of property, of position in the division of labor, etc.); coercion is necessary both to maintain the existing allocation of private property and to resolve conflicts arising from eco-

conomic, religious, and other sources, but only sustains a system premised on inequality, thereby fostering alienation; to reduce coercion to the bare minimum one has no other option but to eliminate the sources of conflict; and that in turn requires and entails the economic, ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural, and social homogenization of society. Or, to put it simply, for the Soviets, sameness was the best guarantee of equality.

Yet it would be a mistake to imagine that the history of communism is the history of a linear progression, a seamless tapestry. On the contrary, there were differences of viewpoint, or if one prefers programmatic conflicts, at all points in time, some of them involving the most basic elements of the vision. One need only think of the aforementioned split between Lenin's Bolsheviks and Martov's Mensheviks in 1903–4. Lenin then favored a closed party and Martov favored an open party (among other issues in contention between them), or again one may recall the more fundamental debate in the 1920s (to be discussed at greater length below) between the Leftists (chiefly Zinoviev and Kamenev), who favored rapid collectivization and the radical transformation of society, and the Rightists (chiefly N. Bukharin, M. Tomskey, and A. Rykov), who favored a more gradual approach, in which the economy would be put on a sound footing before collectivization or other transformative programs would be put into high gear. Again, Stalin repeatedly emphasized that it was possible to build "socialism in one country" (although Mongolia was also under socialist rule at the time) and claimed that Trotsky's references to "permanent revolution" meant that the latter lacked faith in the Soviet project. At the international level, there were also serious differences in the 1960s between Soviet first secretary Nikita Khrushchev, who thought that the communist bloc and the "capitalist" (his term) bloc could coexist peacefully, and China's Mao Zedong, who denounced the doctrine of peaceful coexistence as a form of revisionism. And again, looking at communist-era Yugoslavia, one may find a large number of differences with the Soviet Union and most if not all other communist states, starting with the Yugoslav claim to have devised a unique, more truly Marxist system by introducing workers' councils at the factory level ("self-management") but including also the Yugoslavs' nonalign-

ment in foreign policy, the early introduction (in the first half of the 1960s) of market socialism, and the significant devolution of powers to the six constituent republics which made up the country, beginning in the 1960s.⁵³ The Yugoslavs' divergent path to socialism was both a response to the crisis created by Stalin in 1947–48, which had culminated in the imposition of a Soviet bloc and an economic blockade on Tito's Yugoslavia and the preparations—aborted at the last minute—for an invasion of Yugoslavia, and, at the same time, a source for renewed arguments between the Soviet and Yugoslav communist parties.⁵⁴ That there were also other variations in communist practice across the sundry states which made up the bloc goes without saying.

THE SOVIET UNION UNDER LENIN AND STALIN, 1917–1953

The Soviet Union after World War II consisted of fifteen republics: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Turkmenistan, Tadzhikistan, and Uzbekistan. To these one may add the Finno-Karelian Soviet Socialist Republic, created by Stalin in 1940 in order to signal that the Soviets maintained claims on Finnish territory; the republic was merged into the Russian Republic in July 1956, when the Soviet Union signed a treaty with Finland. Also in 1940, the USSR forced Romania to cede Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, which the Soviets subsequently added to the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, to form the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. Following the Axis invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, Romania temporarily regained control of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, and also annexed Transnistria. However, the Soviets regained control of this region subsequently and reestablished the Moldavian SSR. It is also worth mentioning that a Jewish Autonomous District was created in the Soviet Far East, bordering China, in 1928. The district, sometimes called Birobidjan after its administrative center, was later elevated to a region, but only a trickle of Jews actually moved there. The Jewish Autonomous Region ceased to exist in 1991.

Achievements versus Failures

In its day, Soviet communism constituted the principal challenge to Western-style democracy. Its advocates pointed to various accomplishments for which the regime took credit. These achievements included a rapid program of industrialization; the collectivization of agriculture (achieved by force); considerable achievements in the direction of greater gender equality (albeit motivated in part by the desire to mobilize women into the work force⁵⁵); a general equality of income, housing, and goods; the creation of orthographies for languages which had not been written languages;⁵⁶ and the active promotion of literacy in local languages. In 1914, only about 40 percent of the inhabitants of Imperial Russia were literate; this figure edged upward to 50 percent by 1926 and, by the end of the 1930s, “nearly 75 per cent of the adult population could read.”⁵⁷ Other factors cited by the system’s advocates included the regime’s commitment to full employment, free medical services for all citizens, pensions so that retired persons could live in dignity, the active promotion of Russian as a lingua franca, so that every citizen of the country could make himself understood in any part of the country, and the ideology of a workers’ state, allowing ordinary workers to identify the state with their own interests.

Critics, however, had their own list, which showed the regime in a very different light. In the 1930s alone, according to Ronald Suny, the Stalin regime murdered between 10 and 11 million persons.⁵⁸ The anti-religious campaign (advocates of which might even add to their list of achievements) caused much hardship for religious believers and many beautiful, historic churches were destroyed. Basic freedoms taken for granted in the West, such as freedoms of speech, assembly, press, and conscience, did not exist in the Soviet Union. Critics also emphasized that the Soviet Union was a controlled society, in which cultural products such as films, works of music, and literature were closely monitored, molded, and reworked according to political criteria, censored, or repressed. In a famous example, after Stalin (1879–1953), the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, went to see a performance of Dmitry Shostakovich’s opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, he wrote an article “Muddle instead of music” published on the front

page of the daily newspaper *Pravda*. After that, the opera was suppressed and many contracts for works by Shostakovich were canceled. For that matter, in 1949, Stalin decided that saxophones were to be banned; saxophonists were instructed to deliver their “decadent” instruments for confiscation, typically receiving some other instrument in exchange.⁵⁹ Again, the Soviet system resulted in the retardation of science and the humanities, especially in the fields of genetics, psychology, and history; the first two fields were banned in Stalin’s time and into the Khrushchev era, while history had to be written and rewritten according to the changing needs of the ruling party. Finally, one should mention the extensive system of surveillance involving not only the secret police but also an extensive network of informers and neighborhood watch committees.

The Path to the October Revolution

The establishment of the Soviet Union may be credited above all to the work of Lenin. His eldest brother, Alexander Ulyanov, was hanged in 1887 for his participation in a plot to kill Tsar Alexander III; this radicalized Vladimir Ulyanov (who was not yet known as Lenin) and he drifted into opposition politics, joining the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. He was arrested in 1895 and sent to Siberia for fourteen months. Subsequently he lived in several European cities, including Zürich, Vienna, and Manchester, working on a leftist newspaper and agitating for revolution. In 1903, he split the Russian Social Democrats to form his own party, the Bolshevik Party. Then, in 1905, there was an uprising in Russia. The tsar promulgated a manifesto on 17 October 1905, establishing a Duma (Assembly), to be elected based on a franchise embracing a large proportion of the population.⁶⁰ As John Keep has pointed out, “the direct control which the Duma could exercise over the administration was limited to the right to make interpellations; ministers were responsible only to the tsar, who retained supreme executive power.”⁶¹ Yet it has been suggested that, despite its defects and weaknesses, “it could have been a very serviceable instrument in the

hands of more experienced parliamentarians.”⁶² But that proved not to be the case, and the Duma disappeared in the course of 1917.

Ultimately, it was World War I that brought about the death of the tsarist system. The tsar sent troops into battle without sufficient weapons, and the drain on the economy was huge. By early 1917, discontent was rife. Soldiers were deserting the front lines, peasants were seizing land, and there was unrest in the capital, Petrograd (as St. Petersburg was called between 1914 and 1924). On 16 March 1917 (3 March according to the Julian calendar in use in Russia at the time), the tsar abdicated in favor of his brother, Grand Duke Mikhail, who refused to accept the throne until a Constitutional Assembly would be established and until that Assembly would ratify his accession.⁶³ Mikhail never ascended the throne; instead, the Duma assumed a more significant role, forming a Provisional Government. Meanwhile, Lenin returned to Russia in a sealed train provided by the Germans (with whom Russia was at war) and organized his own rival government in the Smolny Institute. Between March and November 1917, there was an uneasy form of cooperation between these two governments. For example, orders issued to local authorities by the Provisional Government were not respected unless they were cosigned by the Soviets.⁶⁴ But in April 1917, Lenin issued his so-called April Theses. In this document, he claimed that the formation of the Provisional Government had signaled the completion of the bourgeois revolution; that meant, in his literal reading of the works of Marx and Engels, that the Bolsheviks should focus on strengthening the soviets (councils), by building up workers’ militias, and on propaganda efforts among the soldiers of the Russian army. Although Lenin was not, at that time, calling for the immediate overthrow of the Provisional Government, his theses served to bring greater unity to the Bolsheviks than had been the case previously.⁶⁵ Still, but for the “Kornilov Affair,” in which General Lavr Kornilov stumbled into a putsch against the government, provoking the latter into letting a few incarcerated Bolsheviks out of prison and arming them, the Bolsheviks might not have been able to seize power when they did. In addition, as a result of the Kornilov uprising, a number of Bolshevik soldiers were able to break out of prison on 29 August, with the help of sympathetic guards.⁶⁶ Be that as it may, on 7 November 1917 (25 October under the Julian cal-

endar), Bolsheviks stormed the Winter Palace, where the Provisional Government had made its headquarters. This brought an end to the period of dual authority.

Civil War and War Communism

The early Bolsheviks were influenced by Friedrich Engels's idea that, after a proletarian (workers') revolution, the state would soon start to wither away, with workers administering the society themselves. According to Engels and Lenin, however, there would be a transitional phase called the dictatorship of the proletariat, during which the new revolutionary authorities would need to deal with lingering resistance from the old privileged classes and set the revolutionary programs of transformation in motion. In practice, however, the withering away of the state never began.

But the attack on the old order got underway very quickly, with the Bolshevik repudiation of old customs (including the abolition of traditional marriage and the establishment of a Bureau of Free Love)⁶⁷ and, briefly, a total rejection of all law as "bourgeois." One of the most radical Bolsheviks was Alexandra Mikhailovna Kollontai (1872–1952), who served as commissar of State Welfare from November 1917 to March 1918; she subsequently established the Women's Section (Zhenotdel) of the Bolshevik Party, heading that section from 1920 to 1922. Her vision of the communist future, which she expected to see realized in her lifetime,⁶⁸ reflected her faith in the natural goodness of ordinary human beings and counted on people to organize their communal life without interference from state or party. She demanded full equality for women and called for the nuclear family to wither away, with household duties including child-rearing, cooking, and dusting becoming the responsibilities of the collective.⁶⁹ This utopian-collectivist vision was, in fact, the official or semi-official position of the party during the initial years following the Bolshevik seizure of power.⁷⁰ One of the Bolsheviks' most important decisions at this point in time was to endorse the peasants' seizure of land from the great landowners; this won the Bolshevik government considerable support among the peasants at that time. Their

revolutionary/radical egalitarianism manifested itself in the abolition of ranks in the army, the establishment of a conductorless orchestra (Per-simfans), and the appointment of shop and tool workers to serve as factory directors. The Bolsheviks were ready, in fact, to rethink many commonly assumed notions and institutions; there was talk, thus, of converting Russian to the Latin alphabet and of abolishing marriage, alongside some experimentation, especially along “proletarian” lines, in art and music. The Bolsheviks wanted to bring culture to the working class and during the period September to mid-December 1918, the People’s Commissariat for Enlightenment organized 106 concerts in Petrograd alone.⁷¹ Many of the concerts were held at workers’ clubs and suburban centers, in order to reach the widest possible public, and factory workers were herded into often unheated halls, and, armed with introductory lectures and pamphlets, were exposed to music such as many of them had never heard. This was also an era of revolutionary enthusiasm, during which the Red Army was sent into Poland and Mongolia, with semi-spontaneous Soviet governments sprouting in Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Hungary, and Germany: the latter three proved to be short-lived. Leon Davidovich Trotsky (1879–1940), founder of the communist Red Army, popularized the term “permanent revolution,” which expressed the almost universal expectation among the early Bolsheviks that the Revolution could and should and would spread quickly and widely. The Bolsheviks also established the Cheka (the secret police) less than a month after seizing power; the Cheka employed terror against actual and perceived rivals for power.

The Bolshevik Party was factionalized from the beginning and, when it came to peace negotiations with Imperial Germany in early 1918, the party’s leading council was divided almost evenly. Indeed, on 28 February 1918, the Politburo voted 5 to 4 (with 4 abstentions) to accept Germany’s terms. These terms temporarily cost Russia 34 percent of its population, 54 percent of its industry, 89 percent of its coal mines, and 32 percent of its agricultural land.⁷² But the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk did not bring the war in Russia to a close, and fighting continued for another three years.

The Bolsheviks had to fight a Civil War on three fronts against groups seeking to defend the interests of the great landowners and to restore

some version of the *ancien régime*. The most important White (monarchist) armies were those led by Admiral Aleksander Vasilyevich Kolchak (1874–1920), Lt. General Anton Ivanovich Denikin (1872–1947), and Baron (General) Pyotr Nikolayevich Wrangel (1878–1928). But there were also German, British, American, and Japanese troops on Russian soil, supporting the Whites, together with small contingents from France, Italy, and Canada.⁷³ There were also some 40,000 members of the so-called Czechoslovak Legion, a body of armed former POWs, who, in June 1918, seized control of the Trans-Siberian Railway and occupied various cities. It was also during this time that Poland initiated hostilities with the Bolsheviks (leading to the aforementioned abortive Red Army invasion of Poland).

Even before the war was over, the Bolsheviks began holding large open-air festivals to reenact the revolution and celebrate past and present war heroes. In the summer of 1918, for example, after the Bolsheviks had secured their control of the city of Voronezh, they established a municipal theater and produced a two-hour spectacle in a natural amphitheater on the banks of the Voronezh River. The production celebrated the capture of Azov from the Turks by the naval forces of Peter the Great (1672–1725) and used soldiers from the newly established Red Army as well as stunt men from the Cinizelli Circus and local yachtsmen.⁷⁴ In 1920, a reenactment of the October Revolution was staged in front of the Winter Palace and involved more than 100,000 participants. The spectacle began at 10 p.m. when a searchlight atop the Alexander Column lit up the White stage, revealing an actor playing Alexander Fyodorovich Kerensky (1881–1970), who had served as the second chairman of the Russian Provisional Government from 21 July to 7 November 1917. In the reenactment, “Kerensky” was sitting on a royal throne while “capitalists pushed sacks of money with their bellies towards Kerensky’s throne”; as this was going on, “one saw workmen and women, children and cripples reeling home tired from the factories; [and] maimed soldiers toiling up to the bridge because the order had been issued that new armies were to be formed.”⁷⁵ Then from a separate stage draped in red, one heard cries of “Lenin!” at first indistinctly, and then, as more and more people joined in, growing steadily louder. The spectacle reached its climax with the military victory by the Red forces and a rousing

chorus of "The Internationale," the anthem of the international communist movement.

By early 1921, the Civil War was over (although Japanese troops remained in Russia until late 1922). The war had claimed about a million in combat casualties or as a result of White or Red terror; in addition, millions died from disease, hunger, and freezing temperatures. A million people fled abroad.⁷⁶ Those fleeing the country included many professionals, while an additional 15 million people were lost as a result of border changes in the West.

During the war, the Bolshevik government took a series of decisions intended to shore up its campaign against the Whites and to begin the process of transformation of the country. Collectively these measures are known as "War Communism." These included a radical drive for free education and abolition of all national privileges, the declaration of the equality of women and men, the nationalization of banks, foreign trade, and transport, the rapid extension of direct government control over all production and distribution, the abolition of private trade and confiscation of retail shops, and the wholesale nationalization of large-scale industry. Already by the end of 1920, the state owned some 37,000 enterprises.

The Bolsheviks also ordered the closure (just two days after their seizure of power) of all newspapers which they felt stirred confusion or incited people to acts of disobedience, although this was described at the time as a temporary measure. A month later, the new revolutionary authorities shut down all courts and the office of the procurator (i.e., public prosecutor), and dismissed all civil magistrates. These measures kindled resistance at both the elite level (in particular criticisms of Bolshevik policies by the so-called Democratic Centralist Opposition at the Ninth Party Congress in March–April 1920) and the mass level (here, above all the Kronstadt rebellion which began on 2 March 1921, in which some 14,000 sailors at Kronstadt Fortress in Petrograd demanded the end to Bolshevik dictatorship). The Kronstadt rebellion was put down and 10,000 sailors were massacred without trial. But the Bolsheviks realized that they needed to moderate their policies, at least for the time being.

The New Economic Policy, 1921–1927

The reversal of policy was announced at the Tenth Party Congress (8–16 March 1921), which declared a New Economic Policy (NEP) characterized by *laissez faire*, the partial restoration of private enterprise, the reintroduction of money (which had been banned earlier), the legalization of credit and loan associations, and even the establishment of a state lottery. These measures contributed to an economic revival but also entailed a return to a free labor market, and trade unions were in a position to bargain for higher wages. *Laissez faire* in economics was also associated with a new *laissez faire* in cultural policy and nationalities policy. Marriage too was restored. In these conditions, Ukraine and Belarus in particular experienced a revival of the local languages (which had languished during tsarist times) and a flourishing of literature and poetry in Ukrainian especially. These measures were understood as a temporary retreat and could be justified under Lenin's old slogan (from 1904), "one step forward, two steps back" (a slogan that is often misquoted). But while those on the Left were impatient to get on with the radical transformation of society and wanted the retreat to be brief, those on the Right wing of the party advocated a more cautious approach, as previously mentioned. Both Left and Right agreed, however, that the NEP was making concessions to individual interests, at the expense of their vision of the collective interests of the entire Soviet people, and that the realization of greater economic equality was not best served by allowing even limited private enterprise. At the time, however, future rivals Bukharin and Zinoviev both defended the NEP. "We are making economic concessions in order to avoid political ones," Bukharin conceded, while Zinoviev insisted that "NEP is only a temporary deviation, a tactical retreat, a clearing of the land for a new and decisive attack of labour against the front of international capitalism."⁷⁷

Meantime, the same policy reversal was also found in the religious sphere. Initially, the Bolsheviks were fiercely antireligious. Part of the reason for this was the close association of the Russian Orthodox Church with the tsar and his court, and with the upper classes in general. But the Bolsheviks also felt that religion in general was associated with superstition and empty legends. Thus, after issuing a decree national-

izing Church lands (in November 1917), subsequently secularizing marriage and divorce, and separating Church and state, the Bolshevik authorities sought to undermine people's Christian faith by exposing relics of saints as frauds. The Bolsheviks' preferred method was to dispatch a group of officials to a monastery to prove that relics thought to be the bones of saints were actually animal bones mixed with wax. After this, the monks and nuns associated with the monastery in question could be brought before a people's court on charges of "relic fraud." The antirelic campaign lasted for two years, from 23 October 1918 to 1 December 1920, and resulted in sixty-five inspections of relics.⁷⁸ Not surprisingly, the Russian Orthodox Church took the side of the Whites during the Civil War.

But early efforts to stamp out religion met with resistance. Although the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment forbade religious instruction in general schools, parents were intent on keeping religion in the curriculum and, as of 1918, even local soviets (councils) were supporting this in some rural regions.⁷⁹ Rather than try to fight the Church head-on, thus, the Bolsheviks tried a new approach. They adopted a policy of divide and conquer, which operated on two levels. On the first level, they allowed Protestants more freedom than they had ever enjoyed in tsarist times, with the result that the number of Baptists and Evangelical Christians in the country rose dramatically from 150,000 in 1917 to more than 500,000 by 1929.⁸⁰ On the second level, they gave their backing to a reformist current which was emerging within the ranks of the Russian Orthodox Church, resulting in the creation of the Living Church, which was sympathetic to the idea of a socialist revolution. At its peak, the Living Church controlled about 80 percent of church buildings in Russia, with the remaining 20 percent controlled by bishops and clergy loyal to the patriarch.⁸¹

The party encountered resistance to its efforts to assert control also in other spheres. For example, what became the Komsomol initially emerged as an independent initiative and, while a resolution adopted in 1919, made the Central Committee of the Komsomol subordinate to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,⁸² as late as 1927, "60 per cent of the Komsomol's rural network of cells existed in villages and settlements without any party organization."⁸³ Moreover,

religious-affiliated youth groups as well as Boy Scout groups continued to function well into the 1920s.⁸⁴

Universities were also to be brought under party control and, as early as 1920, universities were shorn of their autonomy, with the appointment of communist rectors, although professors retained some degree of freedom in their lectures. Nonetheless, teachers were subject to harassment by local authorities throughout the 1920s.⁸⁵ Similarly, on the cultural front, control was a priority from the start. Still, when the radical Proletkul't organization was formed in mid-1917—thus, before the October Revolution brought the Bolsheviks to power—it operated autonomously and aspired to exercise a leading role in the cultural sphere. This ran counter to Bolshevik thinking, however, and by March 1921 Proletkul't had lost its autonomy and had been subordinated to the Commissariat of Enlightenment.⁸⁶

RIVAL VISIONS 1, LEFT VERSUS RIGHT BOLSHEVISM IN THE 1920s

At the time of the October Revolution in 1917, the Bolsheviks shared a common long-term vision: the creation of a communist utopia, in which the state would have withered away, taking with it the bureaucracy, the police, the monetary system, and of course organized religion. This was to be a new historical stage. But the Bolsheviks disagreed as to how best to achieve that utopia. In other words, they subscribed to rival medium-term visions. There were two central challenges that divided them: the first was whether and how to prioritize world revolution, and the second was how to manage the economy in the transitional phase. As Soviet history is usually simplified, there were two broad camps: the Left Bolsheviks—especially Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev—who wanted to promote world revolution and to accelerate the revolution in the countryside and the transformation of the economy in general; and the Right Bolsheviks—especially Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsy—who wanted to defer world revolution and focus on building socialism at home (or “socialism in one country” as Stalin would later call this approach) and to manage the economic transfor-

mation gradually and through persuasion. Each of these views or camps had various lesser known adherents. Stalin is typically seen as having avoided any commitment to either of these orientations until he had ousted his rivals and monopolized power.⁸⁷ In actuality, although the foregoing representation captures some of what went on in early Soviet history, the actual story was more complex. To begin with, some of these figures took different stances at different points in time. For example, when the issue of sending the Red Army into Poland came before the Politburo in 1920, Trotsky was opposed to giving priority to spreading the revolution (opposed, one may say, to prioritizing “permanent revolution”), fearing that the young Soviet state was too weak and vulnerable to take this risk. Stalin, on the other hand, after initially supporting Trotsky, eventually changed his mind and supported Lenin, contributing to the majority decision that resulted in the Red Army being sent into Poland on a disastrous mission.⁸⁸ To use Stalin’s later vocabulary, one might say that Trotsky, at this time, figured as a champion of “socialism in one country,” while Stalin advocated “permanent revolution”; later, their positions were reversed, with Stalin defending a position of withdrawing from the effort to prioritize the export of revolution and Trotsky criticizing him not only for establishing a one-man dictatorship but also for abandoning the cause of world revolution.

Second, because of their hesitancy at the time of the October Revolution, Zinoviev and Kamenev were initially described as Right Bolsheviks, while Bukharin, enthusiastic both for the seizure of power in October/November 1917 and for promoting world revolution, was cast as a Left Bolshevik. As the situation on the home front evolved, Zinoviev and Kamenev came to be regarded as Left and Bukharin, the advocate of a gradualist transformation, as Right. Both Zinoviev and Kamenev were upset at the growing inequalities spawned by NEP and, in September 1925, Kamenev demanded that the government intervene to establish higher wages for industrial workers.⁸⁹ Third, the coalitions were not frozen in these positions. In essence, there were certain ad hoc coalitions at the time of the Civil War and when discussing possible opportunities in Poland; this was followed by the Left-Right polarization noted above. Finally, after their expulsion from power, Zinoviev and Kamenev, the

erstwhile rivals, even foes, of Trotsky, joined Trotsky in fashioning a weak anti-Stalin bloc.

At first, the Bolshevik vision embraced a determination to promote “world revolution,” though it should be added that, when the Bolsheviks spoke of this, they had in mind chiefly the export of their revolution to Germany, Great Britain, France, and such other European countries as might be receptive. In accord with this commitment to this vision, they founded the Third (Communist) International—or Comintern, for short—in March 1919. In a New Year’s proclamation to the Soviet people on 1 January 1920, the newly founded Comintern declared: “We shall establish workers’ and soldiers’ councils [soviets] in Berlin and Warsaw, in Paris and London, and the might of the Soviets will one day extend throughout the whole world.”⁹⁰ Then, in the spring of 1920, a “Red” insurrection in Germany’s Ruhr region excited Bolshevik fantasies of opportunity in Germany. There were also communist uprisings in Thuringia and Saxony while a Soviet Republic was even proclaimed in the Vogtland. Meanwhile, within the context of the Russian Civil War, Polish forces commanded by Marshal Józef Piłsudski invaded Ukraine in February 1919 and, before the end of that year, had captured much of Western Ukraine. On 7 May 1920, Polish troops occupied Kiev only to be forced to abandon that city on 11 June. It was at this point that the question arose, for the Bolsheviks, whether the Polish retreat represented an opportunity to carry the revolution westward on Soviet bayonets. Lenin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev were in favor of sending the Red Army into Poland, while Trotsky, Dzierzynsky, and Radek were opposed. Stalin, as already mentioned, was the “swing voter,” who at first shared the concerns of Trotsky et al., but later joined the others in supporting the proposition to carry the revolution into Poland.

At first Soviet forces seemed to be unstoppable and Poland seemed destined to come under the sway of the Soviets. It was at this point that the Comintern held its Second Congress, in July 1920. Addressing its first session on 19 July, Zinoviev, as chairman of the Comintern could scarcely contain himself. “We are fighting against the international bourgeoisie,” he declared,

against a world of enemies who are armed to the teeth, and we must have an iron international proletarian organisation that is able to beat the enemy everywhere ... The workers of the various countries unite to free themselves from the yoke of the rich. And what could at the same time be more sublime? Comrades, do you not hear the wings of victory beating? Our Earth *shall* be free. Wage slavery shall be abolished, communism shall triumph.⁹¹

Lenin was next to speak and, like Zinoviev, Lenin saw the dawn of a new historical epoch. He told the gathering,

The principle that the exploited should rise against their exploiter and form soviets is not too complicated. This will become clear to hundreds of millions of the oppressed and exploited masses throughout the world through the experience that we have made in two and a half years of the Soviet Republic in Russia and since the First Congress of the Communist International ... [Our] work is the cause of the proletarian world revolution, the work of creating the world Soviet Republic.⁹²

Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky's exhausted Red Army troops reached the outskirts of Warsaw on 12 August 1920 but, by 16 August, Polish forces commanded by Piłsudski routed the Red Army, forcing it to flee.

The following year, the Communist Party of Germany, in coordination with the Comintern, made a bid for power, arming workers in the Halle-Merseburg-Leuna region; this ended on 29 March 1921 in a sanguinary battle at the Leuna chemical factory. The extreme left made another bid for power a little over two years later. Specifically, on 23 August 1923, the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union decided that the time was ripe for the communists to seize power in Germany. Stalin, for all of his later declamations about socialism in one country, waxed enthusiastic about prospects for an expansion of Bolshevik power and wrote, in late September: "The coming revolution is the most important event of our time. The victory of the revolution in Germany will have great significance for the proletariat in Europe and America ... The victory of the German proletariat will mean, without doubt, that Berlin will replace Moscow as the center of the world revo-

lution.”⁹³ German and Soviet communists spent weeks preparing the uprising but, when it was finally launched in October 1923, it was easily quashed.⁹⁴

Despite these repeated setbacks, the Bolsheviks clung, for a while, to their vision of a world revolution. Thus, Stalin, in his pamphlet, *The Foundations of Leninism*, published in early 1924, “maintained that the proletariat, while able to seize power in a particular country, could not create a socialist economy in that country” in the absence of support from other socialist states. But Stalin rethought his position in the following months and, in an article bearing the title “The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists,” published in December 1924, he now argued the contrary thesis, namely, that it was possible to build socialism in one country after all.⁹⁵ Bukharin had championed the cause of world revolution in 1919⁹⁶ and had argued, in 1920, that “the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot triumph if the proletariat in different countries are isolated from each other,” and called for “an adhesion, a bond, a cohesive union between all the emerging proletarian soviet republics.”⁹⁷ By 1925, Bukharin had come around to the idea that the young Soviet state should focus its energies on domestic challenges, thereby accepting Stalin’s newly minted slogan of socialism in one country. In other words, Bukharin had now joined Stalin in watering down the great vision which had inspired the Bolsheviks in the first place. In the meantime, the Fourteenth Party Congress convened in Moscow, 18–31 December 1925. Zinoviev and Kamenev used this occasion to criticize Stalin’s embrace of the program associated with his slogan “socialism in one country,” but were repeatedly interrupted by shouting on the part of Stalin’s supporters.⁹⁸ In the wake of this Congress, Zinoviev and Kamenev were demoted from full members of the Politburo to candidate members. But they refused to drop their opposition to Stalin’s ideas and, in December 1926, Kamenev complained, at a session of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, of a right-wing deviation within the party, which had allegedly lost its focus on promoting world revolution.⁹⁹ Ironically, after Zinoviev was stripped of his chairmanship of the Comintern, Bukharin became the head of that organization in 1926. But by this time, the Comintern was no longer actively engaged in promoting world revolution.

After this, the debate over world revolution (or permanent revolution) and socialism in one country figured largely as a debate between Stalin and Trotsky, with Stalin and his allies accusing Trotsky of having been “an agent of Menshevikism,” “an element hostile to the proletariat,” and “an anti-Bolshevist,” and of having espoused an “ultra-left theory of ‘permanent revolution.’”¹⁰⁰ Trotsky, in turn, recalling that, according to both Engels and Lenin, the socialist state was supposed to wither away gradually, pointed out that the Stalinist state was not withering away at all and, hence, should be considered “not a socialist regime, but a *preparatory* regime *transitional* from capitalism to socialism.”¹⁰¹ Trotsky chided Stalin for having abandoned the cause of world revolution and characterized the Stalinist state as a form of debased state capitalism.

The issue of state capitalism had arisen earlier, during the introduction of the NEP in 1921. Against charges that NEP amounted to state capitalism, Bukharin denied that this was the case,¹⁰² or that NEP represented a “capitulation” to the bourgeoisie.¹⁰³

By late 1923, Soviet Russia had developed one of the first modern, mixed economic systems; private enterprise accounted for 88.5 percent of the total number of enterprises, but state enterprises employed 84.1% of the industrial labor force.¹⁰⁴ In addition, the central government retained control of banking and foreign trade. But among party leaders, there were opposing views about this. The voluntarists (the Left Bolsheviks) considered the New Economic Policy to have been a retreat from the pursuit of communism and believed that it was possible to accelerate history through good organization and ruthless tactics. The leading voluntarists were Leon Trotsky (in charge of the Red Army), Grigoriy Zinoviev (head of the Petrograd party organization), and Lev Kamenev (head of the Moscow party organization); however, Zinoviev and Kamenev viewed Trotsky as a rival. Kamenev had stated his view in a pamphlet published in 1920, when he argued that

Whoever does not recognize the necessity for the severest proletarian dictatorship during the transitional period from capitalism to Socialism does not prepare the necessary conditions for the proletariat, on acquiring the central apparatus of power, at once directing it to the suppression of the resistance of the exploiters; whoever does not explain

to the proletariat, as a necessary condition here and now, of its victory, the inevitability of an armed struggle and harsh measures against treason and hesitation, and does not arm the proletariat with the suitable weapons—that person is preparing the ruin of the proletariat and the victory of the bourgeoisie.¹⁰⁵

In the course of the summer and autumn of 1925, Zinoviev and Kamenev began to characterize NEP as a “strategic retreat,”¹⁰⁶ and to demand that the party resume the offensive against remnants of bourgeois economics. In their view, the policy of allowing certain strata to become prosperous and even relatively wealthy was entirely unorthodox, even un-Bolshevik.

Ranged against them were the determinists (Right Bolsheviks) who felt that history could not be accelerated and that attempts to achieve such an acceleration would backfire, causing unnecessary suffering; in concrete terms, they viewed NEP as a success and wanted to see it prolonged—in essence to postpone realization of the domestic side of the vision. The leading determinists were Nikolay Bukharin (then editor of *Pravda*), Aleksey I. Rykov (prime minister), and Mikhail Tomskey (head of the trade unions). At the Fourteenth Party Congress (held in December 1925), Bukharin stated the case for gradualism explicitly: “We shall creep at a snail’s pace, but ... we are building socialism and ... we shall complete the building of it.”¹⁰⁷ As early as 1920, Bukharin had made the case that

The new society cannot suddenly appear like a *deus ex machina*. The component elements develop within the old society and since the issue here is one of economic phenomena, i.e., it touches on the questions of economic structures and relations of production, the elements of the new society must be sought in the relations of production of the old. The question must be put thus: which aspect of the relations of production in a capitalist society can form the basis of the new production structure?¹⁰⁸

A year later, as NEP was being introduced, Bukharin underlined the need to “increase the volume of available products ... by whatever means

are necessary” and argued that growth in agricultural production in particular “can only mean a corresponding growth of bourgeois relations.”¹⁰⁹ He was prepared to admit that “hidden within this growth of nonproletarian, bourgeois, capitalist forms of economy is considerable danger,” but he insisted that “we are interested in expanding the volume of additional products, which we can do only by strengthening the bourgeois tendencies of development.”¹¹⁰ By 1925, Bukharin would claim that, “as a consequence of the New Economic Policy, we have achieved great successes in economic growth ... [in which] the dominant forms have acquired an ever greater likeness to socialism.”¹¹¹

Here, thus, were two rival visions of the path to socialism and communism. One was picking up on Marx’s voluntarist streak and insisting on adopting policies to accelerate history, and the other, perhaps less ideological if nonetheless true to Marx’s determinist streak, insisting that the economic reality of post-Civil War Russia required concessions to the peasantry and the small shop-keepers and craftsmen, so that Russia could be rebuilt. The Left Bolsheviks, by contrast, asked how one could reach the Bolshevik alternative modernity as long as there continued to be a sizeable presence of private enterprise and, accordingly wanted a more regimented society, while the Right Bolsheviks around Bukharin wanted a looser, less regimented society and, as already noted, thought that the peasants could be enticed to join collective farms voluntarily (rather than being forced to join them, as occurred after 1928).

The Rise of Stalin

Lenin, the mastermind of the revolution and chairman of the Politburo (the executive committee of the Communist Party) died on 21 January 1924. In a gesture of respect toward the deceased leader, the leading figures in the party agreed to leave the post of chairman vacant. Few if any of them realized that the power previously associated with the post of chairman would become associated with the post of General Secretary of the party, a post filled, since 3 April 1922, by Joseph Stalin.¹¹² Lenin lived long enough, however, to see the establishment, on 30 December

1922, of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, but the ratification of the first Soviet constitution came only ten days after Lenin had died.

Early studies of Stalin's rise, such as those written by Trotsky¹¹³ and by Isaac Deutscher,¹¹⁴ portrayed Stalin as a ruthless pragmatist, who played one faction against the other in a single-minded determination to achieve sole power; they and other biographers also argued that Stalin used his position as General Secretary to stack the party with supporters who were personally loyal to him. Recently, however, British scholar James Harris has examined the archives of the Central Committee and of the Central Committee Secretariat and has painted a very different picture. According to Harris, "while the Secretariat played a crucial role in Stalin's rise to power, it never became a source of a personalistic control of the Party apparatus as is commonly assumed. [In fact,] the Secretariat was never able to cope with its task of assigning cadres to Party organizations."¹¹⁵ Moreover, it does not seem that Stalin was in a position, until the end of the 1920s, to install people of his choice in the Central Committee. Stalin owed his rise to his ability to articulate the concerns of many of the party members and to a general fear, among many early communists, of his archrival, Trotsky, whom he succeeded in demoting in 1925, in removing from the Central Committee in October 1927, and in expelling from the Soviet Union in February 1929. During the years 1923–25, Stalin worked together with Zinoviev and Kamenev as partners, but, by the latter half of 1925, Stalin's erstwhile allies were becoming wary of the general secretary and Kamenev warned that, in his view, Stalin was "not the kind of figure who can unite the old Bolshevik high command around him."¹¹⁶ But Kamenev's days in office were numbered, as were Zinoviev's, and, after the demotion of Trotsky, Stalin realigned himself with the determinist bloc, joining them in reducing taxes on the peasants and in lifting some restrictions on hiring agricultural workers. Stalin's coalition with Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsky lasted until the expulsion of Zinoviev and Kamenev from the Central Committee at the same time that Trotsky was expelled. Bukharin realized that Stalin was amassing power in what he considered a very un-Bolshevik manner. In June 1929, he published an article in *Pravda*, in which he spelled out his criticisms:

a bureaucratically centralized organization is necessarily distinguished by its separation from life. It works through “instructions,” on the one hand, and “reports,” on the other, the “instructions” generally being based on the “reports.” Its source of information is not the living experience of the leadership, but statements, accounts, and reports. The result is the issuing of instructions that are detached from living, individual “cases.” Even if the instructions correspond to life, they congeal into a formula that contradicts the flow of life; thus, the instructions become transformed from a means into an end in themselves, and exert mastery over people.¹¹⁷

Soon after that, Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsy were removed from their positions and, in July 1929, the widely popular Bukharin was accused of collaboration with foreign capitalists and Trotskyites and, four months later, expelled from the Politburo. The emergent ruling bloc consisted of Stalin, Vyacheslav Molotov, Kliment Voroshilov, Valerian Kuibyshev, Ian Rudzutak, and Mikhail Kalinin.

By the latter 1920s, two clear positions had hardened within the party: a Left-Bolshevik position favoring the rapid transformation of the economy and society, and the promotion of world revolution, and a Right-Bolshevik position favoring gradual transformation of the economy while the economy was built up, and the postponement of world revolution to an indefinite point of time in the future. With Stalin’s victory, it would be his vision that would be hegemonic; and his vision, as already mentioned, combined a Left-Bolshevik approach to the economy with a Right-Bolshevik postponement of efforts to promote world revolution. The direct impact of Stalin’s hegemonic vision would soon be seen.

The First Five-Year Plan

In December 1927, at the Fifteenth Party Congress, the first Five-Year Plan was announced, initiating the drive to abolish private farming and herd peasants onto collective farms. The plan was to expropriate the richer peasants (called kulaks) and to move willing peasants onto col-

lective farms, using the poor and middle-income peasants as a hammer against the kulaks. But the poorer peasants lacked the will for such a campaign, and the middle peasants generally adopted the same tactics as the kulaks, namely hiding their food, burning their crops, slaughtering their livestock, and destroying their own farm implements, rather than allowing them to be seized by Soviet authorities. As of 1928, Russia had 36.1 million horses; by 1934, only 15.4 million remained. During the same period, the number of cattle declined from 66.8 million to 33.5 million, of hogs from 27.7 million to 11.5 million, and of sheep and goats from 114.6 million to 36.5 million.¹¹⁸ In order to bend the peasants to its will, the Soviet regime sent Red Army or GPU (secret police) troops, armed with machine guns, to surround villages. Even so, some peasants refused to surrender and were gunned down. But resistance not only continued but actually intensified. Thus, during the first three months of 1930 alone, there were more than 1,600 instances of mass unrest,¹¹⁹ up from 709 in 1928 and 1,307 in 1929; more than 2.5 million peasants were involved in these acts of resistance. To this one must add nearly 14,000 acts of “kulak terrorism” which cost the lives of 3,155 Bolsheviks and Soviet officials.¹²⁰ Between 1926 and 1939, about 19 million peasants fled the countryside to the city. But by 1933, almost 60 percent of Russia’s peasants had been brought into collective farms.¹²¹

The first Five-Year Plan set ambitious targets in industrial output, and, although output targets were not met, the increases in extraction and production were dramatic. Agricultural output actually declined during the plan period (1928–32), in part because about 12 million people left the countryside, whether they were shipped into forced labor in the diverse camps spread across the Soviet Union, or left voluntarily to work at construction sites or in industry.¹²² On the other hand, there were “massive short-run increases in passenger traffic that ran far beyond plan intentions ... [T]ransport activity quickly rose above plan levels and reached 227 percent of 1928 [levels] by 1932. It fell off somewhat in 1933, but rose again in 1934. Great backlogs of unshipped freight clogged the railroads for three or four years, and passenger travel conditions were chaotic. The overfulfillment of plan targets in this sphere hampered the rest of the economy.”¹²³ Urban housing expanded by an estimated 12 percent during the first Five-Year Plan, but living standards declined

measurably. Some of this was not the fault of either the planners or those trying to meet plan targets, because the world economic depression brought on by the U.S. stock market crash which began on 24 October 1929 impacted both the market for Soviet exports and the availability of needed imports.¹²⁴

TABLE 2.1
Actual increase in output of certain items
during the first two Five-Year Plans— (%)

	1928–32	1933–37
Coal	84	98
Oil	90	37
Steel	37	200
Electricity	168	171

Source: Maurice Dobbs, “Rates of Growth under the Five-Year Plans,”
Soviet Studies, vol. 4, no. 4 (April 1953), 366.

But for all the shortfalls of the plans, the increases in the output of coal, oil, steel, and electricity in the first two plan periods were remarkable (see Table 2.1). Mined coal went up from 10 million tons in 1928 to 73 million tons in 1940, and iron ore from 1 million tons to 5.5 million tons over the same period. In the same years, steel production increased from 2 million tons to 9 million tons, while kilowatt hours of energy produced rose from 3.2 billion to 31 billion.¹²⁵ The people of the Soviet Union paid a huge price for this transformation, which was achieved in part by slave labor, but the result was that the Soviet Union, which was only “a minor industrial power” in the 1920s, emerged by the end of the 1930s, as “an industrial military power on the scale of the most advanced countries.”¹²⁶ Military build-up was included already in the first Five-Year Plan, but with the advent of the second plan period came significant changes in military technology. The pace of military build-up was quickened as the third Five-Year Plan (1938–42) got underway, but this plan was interrupted and diverted when the German Wehrmacht invaded the USSR in June 1941.¹²⁷ The fourth Five-Year Plan would not be launched until 1947 and ended, as scheduled, in 1951.¹²⁸

Saboteurs, Bathing, and Stakhanovites

As with the first Five-Year Plan, the second Five-Year Plan set targets that were impossible to meet. But Stalin, who was increasingly posing as omniscient and infallible, was not prepared to admit that the targets had been set too high or to assume responsibility for the failure to meet targets. The result was that the failure to realize targets would be blamed on saboteurs and “wreckers” who were put on trial and imprisoned. This in turn encouraged people to falsify results, so that the production figures reported would correspond to what the authorities wanted to see.

Simultaneously, there was a regime-sponsored campaign to promote public health, which was seen as relevant for labor productivity. Thus, the People’s Commissariat for Health issued detailed instructions to Soviet citizens on how to wash their bodies, their clothes, and their bed linens. In the Red Army, regulations required that soldiers wash their hands before meals and brush their teeth upon starting their day and before retiring for the night. Soviet authorities also targeted card playing, billiards, and dancing for criticism, and there was even, albeit only briefly, an attempt to outlaw card playing altogether.¹²⁹ During the Great Terror (1934–38), the Komsomol youth organization went further and “portrayed dancing as an activity that could lead to political as well as moral degeneration.”¹³⁰ In place of such activities, the Soviets promoted visits to workers’ clubs, palaces of culture, houses of leisure, and parks of culture, as they were called.

More striking was the Stakhanovite movement, a high-production labor movement which took off after it was reported that Aleksei Grigorievich Stakhanov (1906–77), a miner in the Donets basin, had mined 102 tons of coal in five hours and forty-five minutes—fourteen times his quota—on 31 August 1935. Subsequently, on 19 September, he was said to have mined 227 tons of coal in a single shift. Stakhanov was now held up as a model for emulation, his face emblazoned on posters and featured in newspapers; his likeness was also reproduced on the cover of *Time* magazine, on 16 December 1935. In commemoration of his achievement, 1936 was declared the “Year of Stakhanov” and Stakhanovite shock brigades were formed in all sectors of the economy. These brigades enjoyed special rations and were assured of adequate rest between periods

of frenetic work; their method was to arrive at a factory, for example, and then work at full speed for an hour or two, setting a standard which the regular workers were expected to attain over longer periods of time. As Stephen Kotkin has noted, Stakhanovism resulted in “a genuine record-mania that transformed the task of rolling or smelting steel into sport.”¹³¹ Soviet authorities claimed that the Stakhanovite movement significantly boosted labor productivity; according to official reports, industrial labor productivity increased by 41 percent during the first Five-Year Plan (1929–32) and by 82 percent during the second Five-Year Plan (1933–37). But, as Archie Brown has pointed out, “there was a large element of subterfuge involved in most Stakhanovite achievements.”¹³² It was later admitted, after Stakhanov himself was dead, that he had enjoyed the assistance of many “helpers” on his historic day.¹³³

Repression and Coercion

Ronald Suny, citing KGB archives, estimates that, in 1937 and 1938 alone, some 681,692 persons were executed. He adds that, if one includes the 4–5 million persons who perished in the course of the famine of 1932–33, adding that to the number of prisoners, internally exiled, and executed, then “the total number of lives destroyed in the 1930s runs from 10 to 11 million.”¹³⁴ The mass murder inevitably impacted births, and thus, as Peter Kenez reports, in the suppressed census of 1937, Soviet authorities found a shortfall of 14–15 million persons.¹³⁵

Although there were show trials beginning in 1928, it was not until the assassination of Sergey Mironovich Kirov (1886–1934), the Lenin-grad party secretary, in December 1934 that the terror escalated. From 1934 through 1938, many of the Old Bolsheviks were arrested, tried, convicted, and executed. The victims of the Great Terror included Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsy, and also Marshal Mikhail Nikolayevich Tukhachevsky (1893–1937), a popular Red Army commander. Before being executed, the accused were forced, either by torture or by threats to their families, to confess to preposterous crimes including participation in allegedly vast conspiracies. Occasionally, someone might summon the courage in court to deny the charges. For

example, N. N. Krestinsky, who had briefly served as general secretary of the party at one time and who had been serving as deputy commissar for foreign affairs at the time of his arrest, risked torture by telling the court (in March 1938), “I do not admit any guilt. I am not a Trotskyite. I never took part in the ‘Right-Trotskyite Bloc’ and wasn’t aware of its existence. I never committed a single one of the crimes imputed to me, and in particular I do not confess myself guilty of contacts with German intelligence.”¹³⁶ But such acts of bravery were, by far, the exception and, in any case, did not make any difference for the outcome.

The Great Terror took a huge toll on the political elite. Of the 139 members and candidate members of the Central Committee who had been elected at the Seventeenth Party Congress in 1934, 98 of them were later arrested and shot. In 1956, First Secretary Khrushchev would tell members of the Central Committee (in his so-called secret speech) that, of the 1,966 deputies to that Congress, 1,108 were later arrested as counter-revolutionaries, and that of the 10 Politburo members in 1934, four were dead by 1939—one of them (Kirov) had been assassinated, another committed suicide, a third was executed, and a fourth died of a heart attack.¹³⁷ The terror also had a huge impact on people’s public and private behavior, so that behavior that would be counted as “paranoid” in other countries was in fact reasonable, while behavior which would be counted as “reasonable” elsewhere was in fact reckless. Various theories have been advanced to explain the extremity of violence associated with the Great Terror. Although efforts to trace the violence to Stalin’s personality or mental makeup will continue to find supporters, it is also reasonable to suppose that the goals that Stalin set—collectivization, accelerated industrialization, and the imposition of a single vision (his own)—literally required a certain amount of coercion and violence and that, with each application of coercion and violence, Stalin felt exposed to additional hostility and resentment, and therefore grew steadily more fearful even of close associates. Hence, the widening terror.

As Stalin’s power grew, so did his leadership cult, too, which was summed up in the slogan, “Stalin is Lenin today!” This simple slogan points to the fact that the personality cult in Stalin’s Soviet Union consisted of two elements: a posthumous cult of Lenin, launched while Lenin was still alive and graphically manifested by the placement of Lenin’s

embalmed body on display on Red Square, and a cult of Stalin himself. Nonetheless, Stalin, in fact, “revised, suppressed, and even reversed much of the legacy of Lenin.”¹³⁸ Everywhere, Stalin was praised as a great genius and was given credit for inspiring work in every field of human endeavor from astronomy to literature to economics. In children’s magazines, Stalin and the secret police were held up for admiration; the magazines published letters from children addressed to Nikolay Ivanovich Yezhov (1895–1940), head of the secret police from 1936 to 1940 in which the children expressed their deep love and appreciation of the secret police chief.¹³⁹ Songs and poems were written in praise of Stalin. One example is A. M. Pashkova’s “You Are Our Bright Sunshine” (1938) which reads in part:

*What Lenin had planned,
Stalin has fulfilled ...
I ... will tell Comrade Lenin:
Look and rejoice
How our foster brother,
Comrade Stalin,
Has built roads
Through the thick forests
And through the soggy swamps.
I ... will also tell Comrade Lenin:
According to your wish,
According to your will,
Our Stalin is leading us to happiness.
We walk along Lenin’s road
With Stalin as with Lenin.
He knows all our thoughts,
All our peasants’ needs.*¹⁴⁰

At the height of the Great Terror, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) received a new constitution, adopted unanimously by the Eighth Congress of Soviets in November 1936. Under this constitution, Soviet citizens were guaranteed the rights to work, recreation, and education, and promised freedom of conscience, speech, press, assembly, and association. The constitution also explicitly assured citizens of their

freedom to engage in “anti-religious propaganda” but said nothing of any freedom to engage in religious propaganda. The various rights and freedoms were, however, qualified by noting that they could be exercised and enjoyed “in the interest of strengthening the Socialist society”¹⁴¹—a qualification that meant, in practice, that speech, for example, which did not serve to strengthen socialism as defined by the state was not assured of protection.

With the passage of the 1936 constitution, which trumpeted that the society was functioning according to the principle “From each according to his ability, to each according to his work,”¹⁴² Stalin hailed the arrival, in the Soviet Union, of the stage of *socialism*. Recall that this was, in Marxist terminology, the intermediate stage between *the dictatorship of the proletariat* and *communism*. Although the Great Terror was in full swing at the time, Stalin’s notion was that the Marxist-Leninist “alternative future” had arrived—at least in its socialist stage. This theme, that *the future is now*, underpinned the design of the Soviet pavilion at the 1939 World’s Fair in New York. Whereas other foreign pavilions at the World’s Fair drew attention to past glories, the Soviet pavilion focused on the future-in-the-present, featuring, among other things, “a full-scale replica of a section of the newly built Maiakovskaia metro station in Moscow, in which mirrors created the illusion of a lengthy metro platform.”¹⁴³ Red marble statues of Lenin and Stalin welcomed visitors in the entrance hall of the pavilion, which also included a central amphitheater, gigantic murals showing happy Stakhanovites, scientists, aviators, collective farmers, and others, charts displaying how the class composition of the population had changed since 1917, and a diorama of the construction of the city of Magnitogorsk. Throughout the pavilion, stress was placed on technological progress, leaps in productivity, and the general satisfaction of the population, and the future¹⁴⁴—it was implied—could only get better yet.

Meanwhile, by the end of the 1930s, the Great Terror had resulted in the liquidation of any conceivable rivals, threats, or challengers to Stalin. Yezhov’s service was no longer needed and by October 1938, Yezhov’s star was in decline and a dossier of his transgressions was assembled. Yezhov’s last public appearance was on 21 January 1939, by which time the Great Terror had come to a close. He was arrested three months later and subsequently executed.¹⁴⁵

Transforming Soviet Society

One of the basic premises of Marxism-Leninism was that ethnic, religious, class, and even gender differences, when politicized, could lead to conflict, inequality, and alienation. This analysis suggested that a solution might be found either in depoliticizing these differences or in reducing the differences. To have attempted to depoliticize these differences in the context of the highly politicized Soviet state would have been a contradiction in terms. Moreover, it would have been in tension with the politicized way in which the new Soviet identity was being promoted. Accordingly, the project of reducing human differences was undertaken. This project was reflected in all spheres of policy, and was manifested, among other things, in the policies of Russification, atheization, and Sovietization, in the promotion of interregional migration and interethnic marriage (especially between Russians and non-Russians), and in the introduction of the Cyrillic alphabet in Central Asia and Azerbaijan. Where nationalities policy was concerned, Soviet spokespersons referred to three interrelated concepts: *rastviet*, the flourishing of national cultures; *sbliizhenie*, the drawing together of national cultures; and *sliyanie*, the merging of national cultures. The idea was that a Sovietized form of Russian culture would form the core around which the various non-Russian cultures would fuse. In fact, the policy of linguistic Russification was pursued vigorously only in the cases of Belarusians, Ukrainians, and Jews; the other peoples of the Soviet Union were, of course, subjected to cultural Russianization and Sovietization, but largely escaped linguistic Russification.

Non-Russians put up resistance to Stalin's rule but, as war clouds gathered over Europe, Stalin feared that the Germans and Poles living on the western frontier might prove to be politically unreliable. One of the remedies adopted by Stalin was the removal of entire population groups and their forcible transfer to other parts of the country. Many of those being deported died en route to the Soviet East; inevitably, the population in the eastern regions increased exponentially.¹⁴⁶ The best-known examples of forcible population transfers involve the deportation of 382,000 Germans to Kazakhstan, Novosibirsk, and other locations in the east (September–October 1941); the deportation of 542,430 Chechen,

Ingush, and Balkars to Central Asia (February 1944); and the deportation of 202,000 Crimean Tatars to Uzbekistan and other locations (May 1944).¹⁴⁷ Earlier—in the 1930s—Stalin had deported Chinese and Koreans from the Far Eastern regions, and “on the eve of World War II, so-called ‘hostile elements’ in the newly annexed areas of the Baltic, Western Ukraine and Belorussia, Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia were deported eastward.”¹⁴⁸ In Estonia, occupied by the Soviets between 1940 and 1941 and reoccupied in 1944 (after the Red Army pushed the German Wehrmacht back), there was a second wave of deportation, now associated with collectivization. To speed along the establishment of collective farms, some 80,000 private farmers and family members were scheduled for deportation eastward. Of this number, about 50,000–60,000 were actually deported; the remaining 20,000–30,000 managed to escape deportation, some of them fleeing to the forests and joining anti-Soviet guerrilla forces which put up resistance for few years.¹⁴⁹

Antireligious Policy

Soviet antireligious policy involved both propaganda and coercion. Among the propaganda tools employed were antireligious museums opened in former monasteries and cathedrals (some forty-four in operation by 1930), antireligious films, and a mass organization known as the League of Militant Atheists, which at its height in 1932 had recruited some 5.5 million members and combined shock work with antireligious propaganda. Coercion included the murder and exile of clergy, the suppression of all religious publications, and the closure, by the beginning of the 1940s, of 95 percent of the roughly 100,000 places of worship that had been in operation since 1917. In 1917, the Russian Orthodox Church had owned more than 50,000 church buildings (80,000 if one counted also chapels and smaller facilities); by 1939, there were only between 200 and 300 Orthodox churches still open in the entire country.¹⁵⁰ Of the 1,242 Orthodox monasteries which had been in operation as of 1917, none were still functioning by the early 1930s. There was an easing up on the Russian Orthodox Church during World War II, when the Soviet regime needed the Church’s support, but this was only a temporary respite.

Socialist Realism

During the last two decades of Stalin's rule, music, art, literature, and architecture operated under the doctrine of socialist realism. The doctrine was formulated in the pages of *Sovetskaya Muzyka* in 1933 by Viktor Gorodinsky as follows:

The main attention of the Soviet composer must be directed towards the victorious progressive principles of reality, towards all that is heroic, bright, and beautiful. This distinguishes the spiritual world of Soviet man and must be embodied in musical images full of beauty and strength. Socialist Realism demands an implacable struggle against folk-negating modernistic directions that are typical of the decay of contemporary bourgeois art, against subservience and servility towards modern bourgeois culture.¹⁵¹

The doctrine meant, in practice, that music, like art and literature, should contribute to consolidating socialism; and that, in turn, meant that atonality or music which seemed to suggest depression or doubts (such as Shostakovich's Symphony No. 8)¹⁵² could only be considered problematic. Within the context of the apparatus of terror and control, the doctrine provided a strong incentive to composers to endeavor to please the authorities. One example of this was Sergey Prokofiev's *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October*, Opus 74, completed in August 1937. Scored for 500 singers and instrumentalists, Prokofiev's cantata set to music words extracted from *The Communist Manifesto*, Lenin's *What Is to Be done?* as well as his various speeches and writings from 1917–18, Stalin's speech about industrializing the country, and finally even extracts from the 1936 constitution, setting them to music.

But sycophancy was not always rewarded. Prokofiev's cantata was rejected by the authorities and was premiered only on 5 May 1966, thirteen years after the composer's death. Moreover, at a meeting with leading Soviet composers in January 1948, Andrei Zhdanov, then Leningrad party secretary and a leading voice in cultural policy, lashed out at Prokofiev, Dmitry Shostakovich, Aram Khachaturian, Nikolay Myaskovsky, and Dmitry Kabalevsky—the most prominent Soviet composers

in their day—together with Vano Muradeli for his ill-fated opera, *The Great Friendship*, for “formalism” (by which he meant prioritizing aesthetic principles over political considerations). The following month, the Central Committee adopted a resolution accusing Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Khachaturian, and Myaskovsky, as well as Vissarion Shebalin and Gavriil Popov, together with unnamed “others,” of “formalistic distortions and anti-democratic tendencies which are alien to the Soviet people.”¹⁵³ Kabalevsky was originally supposed to be included in this company, but his name was eventually dropped from the resolution. The resolution had consequences for these composers’ professional careers, at least in the short run, and therefore also for their financial well-being, as their music disappeared for the time being from concert programs.¹⁵⁴

The Case of Trofim Lysenko

It is ironic but symbolically significant that the most famous name in Soviet science was Trofim Denisovich Lysenko (1898–1976), the poster child of the antigenetics and anti-Darwin campaign. Lysenko first came in the spotlight in 1927, when he was twenty-nine years of age and was given credit, by *Pravda*, for having devised a way to fertilize fields without using fertilizers or minerals. The following year, he announced that he had devised a new agricultural technique he called “vernalization,” involving the use of humidity and low temperatures to stimulate the growth of wheat; the technique, already known by 1854, was in fact neither new nor successful. The driving force behind the antigenetics campaign was none other than Stalin, who viewed genetics as a kind of determinism (which he associated with Bukharin), while he, a committed voluntarist, wanted to believe that the party could accomplish anything it set out to do. Stalin provided the spark in 1931, with a party-government resolution that called for the replacement of low-yield crops with high-yield crops throughout the country within two years; this entailed the creation of new varieties of wheat and potatoes that would be “resistant to cold, drought, pests and blight.”¹⁵⁵ Nikolay Vavilov (1887–1943) and most Soviet geneticists considered these goals both

unrealizable and absurd. But Lysenko, supported by a small group of renegade optimists and opportunists, said that the goals could be met.

Lysenko was convinced, as the French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744–1829) had been, that acquired characteristics could be inherited, and embarked on the Quixotic quest to produce larger harvests and fatter vegetables on the basis of techniques premised on the assumption that genes do not exist. Genetics was, in due course, outlawed in the USSR and the works of Charles Darwin (1809–1882) and Gregor Johann Mendel (1822–1884) were disparaged. Lysenko's enthusiasm for Marxism seemed to be boundless and, in a 1948 publication, he went so far as to write "any science is class-oriented"—a view that Stalin himself considered laughable.¹⁵⁶ But Lysenko retained influence not only through Stalin's remaining years but until after Stalin's successor, Khrushchev had been removed from power in October 1964.

The Great Fatherland War

The breakneck speed of economic transformation under the first two Five-Year Plans, 1928–1937, was motivated not merely by a desire to catch up with Western capitalist countries, but also by a sense, on the part of the Soviet elite, that Europe was heading toward another war. In 1931—thus, even before the Nazis came to power in Germany—Stalin delivered a memorable address, explaining why rapid industrialization was the Soviet Union's only option. "It is sometimes asked," he began,

whether it is not possible to slow down the tempo a bit, to put a check on the movement. No, comrades, it is not possible! The tempo must not be reduced! On the contrary, we must increase it as much as is within our powers and possibilities... .

To slacken the tempo would mean falling behind. And those who fall behind get beaten. But we do not want to be beaten. No, we refuse to be beaten! ... We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or they [will] crush us.¹⁵⁷

In 1939, Stalin agreed to sign a nonaggression pact with German Führer Adolf Hitler; this pact, signed by their respective foreign ministers (and hence known as the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact), allowed the Soviet Union to stay out of the war until 22 June 1941, when Hitler put his Operation Barbarossa into action. The German troops placed Leningrad and Moscow under siege during the winter of 1941–42 and, failing to capture those cities, tried to take Stalingrad the following winter. By 1943, however, the fortunes of war had clearly turned and Soviet forces, equipped with the technologically superior T-34 tank, drove the German forces all the way back to Berlin. The war took a huge toll on the Soviet Union, however, leaving 26–27 million Soviet citizens dead, of whom 20 million were men; as a result of these losses, the postwar population of the Soviet Union stood at 164 million.¹⁵⁸ Some 1,700 towns and 70,000 villages were destroyed as a result of the war, 25 million people were left homeless, and 31,000 industrial enterprises had been destroyed. The war also stimulated anti-Stalin resistance and, in some non-Russian areas, such as Lithuania and Ukraine, nationalist guerrillas resisted the reestablishment of Soviet rule for a few years.

Late Stalinism

Although the war had boosted Stalin's prestige enormously, his deputies had acquired some autonomy in their areas of jurisdiction in the course of the war.¹⁵⁹ As had been the case before the war, Stalin preferred to rule through ad hoc groups and informal channels, rather than through formal channels. In particular, he chose to work through what he called “the ruling group” which, at the end of the war, consisted of four persons aside from Stalin—Georgi Maksimilianovich Malenkov (1902–88), Lavrentiy Pavlovich Beria (1899–1953), Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov (1890–1986), and Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan (1895–1978). Over time Stalin's inner circle came to include also Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev (1894–1971), a member of the Politburo since January 1938, and sometimes also Nikolay Alexandrovich Bulganin (1895–1975), who was elected a candidate member in March 1946. The interactions of this group revolved around watching films selected by Stalin and eating huge

meals in the middle of the night.¹⁶⁰ But there were also serious discussions of policy as well as intrigues.

By 1949, it was clear that Beria, chief of the secret police since November 1938, and Malenkov, who had been added to the Politburo in 1946, were developing an alliance of sorts. Stalin wanted to keep Beria and Malenkov from becoming too powerful and therefore, in December of that year, transferred Khrushchev to the post of first secretary of the Moscow city and regional party committees, giving him broad powers; with this promotion, Khrushchev was well placed to serve as a counterbalance to Beria and Malenkov.¹⁶¹ In early 1950, Khrushchev used his new powers to fire several Moscow officials, replacing them with his own candidates. But Stalin was ever vigilant and, in 1950, reportedly had bugging devices installed in the homes of Molotov and Mikoyan.¹⁶² In such conditions, intrigues were endless. Khrushchev would comment later: "Stalin's version of vigilance turned our world into an insane asylum in which everyone was encouraged to search for nonexistent facts about everyone else."¹⁶³ Beginning in summer 1951, M. D. Riumin was feeding Stalin a stream of disinformation about alleged Jewish conspiracies, leading Stalin to begin talking about a so-called (Jewish) Doctors' Plot, in which leading figures in the Politburo and the inner circle were said to be targets of intended assassinations.

Riumin was rewarded for these "revelations" by being promoted to deputy minister of State Security in October 1951. But it was only a year later that the first action was taken, with the removal of P. I. Egorov as head of the medical administration of the Kremlin. Soon thereafter, more than twenty-five physicians were placed under arrest. Then, on 9 January 1953, Stalin sent around a draft press bulletin to members of the Presidium Bureau charging a "group of terrorist doctors" with plotting "to curtail the lives of Soviet leaders."¹⁶⁴ Historians agree that, with the Doctors' Plot, Stalin was preparing another purge, and intended to remove many of his Politburo comrades. But the plot and preparations for purge were stopped short when Stalin died in the first week of March 1953. His death was announced on 5 March 1953.

THE SOVIET UNION UNDER KHRUSHCHEV AND BREZHNEV, 1953–1982

Initially after Stalin's death, Malenkov assumed the posts of both general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and chairman of the Council of Ministers. Malenkov's colleagues in the Politburo were not prepared to see Malenkov take the top posts in both the party and the government hierarchy and he was forced to relinquish the former. Thus, after a brief period of uncertainty and rivalry, Khrushchev became first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Malenkov served as prime minister from 6 March 1953 to 8 February 1955, when he was replaced in that office by Bulganin. On 27 March 1958, Khrushchev assumed also the post of prime minister, holding the top party and governmental posts until he was forced to resign on 15 October 1964.

RIVAL VISIONS 2, "Goulash Communism" vs. the "Metal-Eaters"

In 1953–55, Malenkov and Khrushchev faced each other as rivals, and offered rival programs, derived from rival visions of where the USSR was at the time and where it should be heading. Malenkov quickly took up the banner of what would later come to be called "goulash communism." He delivered a speech on 8 August 1953, calling for increasing the production of consumer goods and raising the standard of living within a space of just three years.¹⁶⁵ Although he insisted in that speech that the armaments and heavy industries should continue to receive due emphasis, Malenkov was taking a more reformist line than Khrushchev at the time and his call for boosting light industry marked a departure from economic practice under Stalin.¹⁶⁶ Khrushchev wooed the military and heavy industry—the so-called metal-eaters—in his rivalry with Malenkov. As head of the party, Khrushchev controlled the party newspaper, *Pravda*, whose editor, D. Shepilov, published an article on 24 January 1955, titled "The General Line of the Party and Vulgarisers of Marxism." In this article, Shepilov attacked

the authors of the idea that the country entered a new stage of economic development in 1953, the essence of which allegedly lies in a fundamental change in the economic policy of the Party. It [has been] argued that whereas previously the Party had concentrated on the development of heavy industry, today the emphasis had been transferred to the development of light industry. Attempting to present their inventions as demands of the basic economic law of socialism, some economists propose either that heavy and light industry be developed at an equal rate ... or that priority be attached to the development of light industry as compared with heavy industry ... Such assertions are a crude distortion of Marxist-Leninist economic theory and of the Communist Party's decisions regarding the country's industrialization.¹⁶⁷

The following day, Khrushchev addressed a plenary session of the Central Committee to drive home the point that there could be no relaxation of the policy of emphasizing heavy industry and to condemn advocates of a shift in economic policy, such as Malenkov, as wrongheaded. Khrushchev argued further that advocating that consumer goods and light industry be prioritized "is a profoundly erroneous argument, alien to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism. It is nothing less than a slander of the Party, a belching of Right-wing deviation, a belching of views hostile to Leninism which were at one time advocated by Rykov, Bukharin, and their like."¹⁶⁸ At this point in time, Khrushchev cited Stalin favorably and claimed to be continuing Stalin's economic policies; consumer goods were not to be ignored, of course, but the relative priority assigned to their production was to be largely the same as in Stalin's time.¹⁶⁹ But Khrushchev subsequently embraced "goulash communism" and offered a vision of a not-so-alternative future in which the Soviet standard of living would overtake the American standard. It was now that Molotov especially championed the "metal-eaters." In May 1957, while visiting Leningrad, Khrushchev promised that the Soviet Union "would overtake the United States in per capita output of meat, butter, and milk in a few short years. It was an article of Bolshevik faith that socialism could accomplish in a few decades what had taken capitalist countries several centuries."¹⁷⁰ The rivalry between Khrushchev and his Kremlin comrades, which was in part a contest over vision and program, came to a head in

1957, when “Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, and Shepilov who joined them”¹⁷¹ tried to remove Khrushchev from power. Marshal Georgy Zhukov (1896–1974) remembered the first secretary’s support for military procurements and mobilized military aircraft to bring Central Committee members from around the country to a hastily called meeting on 21 June 1957, thereby saving Khrushchev from an early retirement.

The Khrushchev Era, 1953–1964

Whatever he may have said about Stalin’s economic policies, Khrushchev had no wish to continue with Stalin’s terroristic practices, but he remained a firm believer in communism and was convinced that the system could be reformed, even that the Soviet Union would eventually offer its citizens a better life than Western countries could offer. Thus, during his years in power, Khrushchev tried to boost the standard of living, paying more attention than hitherto to consumer needs.

Khrushchev also undertook an ambitious program of reform that included: a partial defanging of the KGB and a restoration of party control over it; a restoration of formal channels of power and of the party itself, with a regularization in the scheduling of party congresses and sessions of the Central Committee; an abortive effort to split the party into industrial and agricultural wings; the opening up of new agricultural lands in Kazakhstan (the “Virgin lands” program); an effort to reduce military expenditures; support for the space program, which enjoyed an early success with the Sputnik satellite in 1957; a New Course in foreign policy, with openings to Egypt, Syria, India, and other Third World countries; and a partial de-Stalinization, signaled with his so-called secret speech.

The speech, delivered on 25 February 1956 to the Twentieth Party Congress, shook the communist world. In this speech, Khrushchev revealed details of the violations of legality in the Stalin era, criticized Stalin’s personality cult, and hinted that Stalin had been responsible for the murder of Kirov.¹⁷² Historians Leonard Schapiro, Donald W. Treadgold, and Nicholas Riasanovsky, among others, have pointed—in Treadgold’s words—to “evidence ... that Stalin himself instigated Kirov’s

murder.”¹⁷³ Isaac Deutscher further claims that “the G.P.U. [as the secret police were called at that time] of Leningrad had known about the planned attempt [on Kirov’s life] and had done nothing to prevent it.”¹⁷⁴ However, after reviewing the contents of those archives in Russia that have recently been opened, Archie Brown concluded that there is no evidence in the archives that Stalin was complicitous in the assassination of Kirov.¹⁷⁵ Khrushchev did not go so far as to rehabilitate Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, or other purged Bolsheviks and oppositionists. Nor did he implicate any of the contemporary members of the Politburo, although his exculpation of Lazar Kaganovich (1893–1991) was condescending. “As for Kaganovich,” Khrushchev recalled, “I don’t think he knew all the details of what happened. Stalin hardly needed to confide in him. Kaganovich was such a yes-man that he would have slit his own father’s throat if Stalin had winked and said it was in the interests of the cause.”¹⁷⁶ Finally, he specifically cited Lenin as “the genius of the revolution,” quoting Lenin’s various lessons.¹⁷⁷ Moreover, Khrushchev carefully and explicitly defended the socialist order and traced the repression and terror no further back than 1934/35. What Khrushchev saw in Stalin, among other things, was that he had elevated his own personal authority over that of the party; Khrushchev wanted to restore the party’s authority.

One of the areas in which Khrushchev aspired to do this was in the sphere of religious policy which, in Stalin’s time, “had been the responsibility, first, of the League of the Militant Godless [League of Militant Atheists] under Yemelyan M. Yaroslavsky and, after the war, at least nominally, of the Society for the Spread of Political and Scientific Knowledge. At no point had the party assumed overt control.”¹⁷⁸ But the fact that Khrushchev wanted to restore party control in this sphere did not mean that Khrushchev intended to liberalize religious policy. On the contrary, Central Committee resolutions adopted on 7 July 1954 and 10 November 1954 called for an intensification of antireligious propaganda. The resolution of 7 July 1954 proposed an ambitious agenda to include antireligious lectures, films, and books, as well as the printing of antireligious fairy tales and the dissemination of songs disparaging religion. Subsequently, in October of that year, a new coordinating committee to organize scientific-atheist research was set up within the

framework of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences, and, for that matter, church closures continued throughout Khrushchev's years in power. Indeed, where the number of functioning Orthodox churches stood at more than 15,000 in 1951, by 1963—as a result of Khrushchev's antireligious drive—fewer than 8,000 were still in operation.¹⁷⁹

On the other hand, Khrushchev did ease up in the spheres of literature and symphonic music. For example, on 21 October 1962, *Pravda* published a poem by Yevgeny Yevtushenko, "Stalin's Heirs," which included the barbed question, "But how can we remove Stalin from within the heirs of Stalin?"¹⁸⁰ Later that year, at the height of the literary and artistic thaw, Khrushchev permitted Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn to publish his critical novel, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, about life in a labor camp. That same year, Shostakovich's Symphony No. 13, *Babyi Yar*, with words by Yevtushenko, was scheduled to be premiered on 18 December. There was intense excitement in Moscow as the date of the premiere approached, as well as rumors that the performance would be canceled at the last minute. But the performance went ahead as scheduled and was a resounding success with the audience, which welcomed the discordant music and searing texts.

In other areas of cultural life, however, Khrushchev showed himself to be deeply conservative. For example, encountering rock 'n' roll for the first time and confusing it with jazz, Khrushchev assailed "jazz" for encouraging its devotees to "wiggle a certain section of the anatomy."¹⁸¹ About the same time, a group of painters thought to take advantage of the limited thaw in cultural policy to stage an exhibition of modern art; Khrushchev visited the exhibition and did not like it, and had it shut down. On 17 December 1962, Leonid Ilyichev, chair of the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee, presented a speech in which he warned:

Formalistic tendencies have unfortunately begun to spread not only in the representational arts but in music, literature, and the cinema as well

Obviously, developments of this kind are not accidental. They bear witness that some comrades misunderstand the nature of the struggle against bourgeois ideology and sometimes lose sight of the irreconcil-

ability of our ideological positions and the impossibility of compromise on them.

We should remember as an immutable truth that art always has an ideological-political bent, that in some way or another it expresses and defends the interests of definite classes and social strata. And when we encounter this or that trend in art, the first question that naturally arises is: Whose interests does it serve, what does it call for, what social ideals does it affirm?¹⁸²

Ultimately, several reforms undertaken by Khrushchev proved to be highly controversial and contributed to his downfall. These included his Virgin Lands program that involved a significant start-up expense; his bifurcation of the party into industrial and agricultural branches; his educational reform of 1958, which required that students work in factories and other enterprises as part of their education; his effort to cut military costs by slashing the size of the ground forces; his abolition of the machine tractor stations;¹⁸³ and his constant rotation of cadres, which left many party apparatchiki feeling insecure. All of these factors, together with the outcome of the Cuban missile crisis¹⁸⁴ and Khrushchev's famous shoe-banging incident at the UN on 29 September 1960, led to his downfall. In October 1964, as a result of a plot organized by Mikhail Andreyevich Suslov and other Politburo members, Khrushchev was removed from office. Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev (1906–82) now became General Secretary of the party, and Aleksei Nikolayevich Kosygin (1904–80) became chair of the Council of Ministers.

The Brezhnev Era, 1964–1982

Where Khrushchev had promoted reforms of various kinds, driven by the ambition to purify the system and perfect it, Brezhnev and his team delivered stability, carefully backing away from the Bolshevik vision of the future, even though the socialist institutions remained in place. One of the first actions taken by the new regime was to repeal Khrushchev's division of the party into industrial and agricultural branches. Where Khrushchev had engaged in the rotation of cadres, Brezhnev and his

team promised and delivered job security—albeit after an early reshuffling, in which Brezhnev edged out of the Politburo certain members with whom he felt less close, bringing in old comrades from Dnepropetrovsk, Moldavia, and Kazakhstan, where he had served as local party secretary.¹⁸⁵ Over time, however, what emerged was a steadily aging gerontocracy. And where Khrushchev had tried to save money by cutting the military budget, Brezhnev and his team pumped additional rubles into the military budget, building up Soviet military strength so that, by the end of the 1960s, the Soviet Union enjoyed “substantial equivalence” with the United States in long-range nuclear forces.¹⁸⁶ But, as Peter Kenz suggests, the political elite in the Brezhnev era “had lost faith in the noble ideas of equality and freedom as essential features of the future communist society,” with the result that “there were no psychological obstacles to using their positions to achieve as much mundane personal gain as possible.”¹⁸⁷ Even so, many Russians would later look back on the Brezhnev era fondly. In particular, a poll conducted by the Public Opinion Fund in September 1999, for example, found that the largest number of Russians felt that, looking across the twentieth century, the Brezhnev era was the time when “ordinary people lived best of all.”¹⁸⁸ A subsequent poll, taken in January 2000, asked Russians to assess whether each of seven periods (Nicholas II, Revolution, Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev, and Yeltsin) was more positive or more negative; the Brezhnev era ranked the highest with a 51 percent “more positive” rating; among the others, only the eras of Tsar Nicholas II and Khrushchev received more approval than disapproval.¹⁸⁹

Like Khrushchev, Brezhnev was prepared to defend the Soviet empire by force if necessary. This led to two invasions: a successful invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 to terminate the innovative experimentation with “socialism with a human face,” and an ultimately unsuccessful invasion of Afghanistan launched in December 1979, intended to shore up a Marxist regime in the face of growing Islamic insurgency.

In the economic sphere, the Soviet Union was already experiencing the beginnings of a slowdown at the beginning of the 1970s. In 1965, Prime Minister Aleksei Kosygin had tried to promote a modest reform in industrial management, intended to give “enterprise directors greater freedom in deciding how to use their profits—for incentive payments to

workers, for example, or for reinvestment in better equipment.” But, as Geoffrey Hosking has pointed out, “the reform failed to touch the fundamentals of the system ... To profit fully from it, enterprises would have needed the freedom to set their own selling prices, and this they were never granted. They were also denied the right to decide on levels and conditions of employment, for example, by dismissing workers who were incompetent or were surplus to needs, for this would have violated the tacit social contract between the party and the working class.”¹⁹⁰

The oil embargo and price hikes in 1973–74, organized by the newly established Organization of Oil Exporting Countries, gave the USSR a reprieve, however. Oil and gold prices increased fivefold during these years; rich in both oil and gold, the Soviet Union benefited. But even so, to finance the arms build-up while also stepping up investments in agriculture, the Brezhnev regime cut back light industry and consumer goods production. By the end of the Brezhnev era, illiteracy—widespread in tsarist times—had been essentially eliminated and more than 100 million people (more than one-third of the population) were enrolled in one or another educational institution. But the birthrate declined and, by the end of the Brezhnev era, the Russian population was essentially stagnant.¹⁹¹ Moreover, by the late 1970s, the economy was likewise stagnant, with output rising by less than 1 percent per capita per year; moreover, given the poorly managed economic system, the Soviet Union was dependent, contrary to Marxist-Leninist presuppositions, on the so-called black economy to provide some essentials.¹⁹² By the early 1980s, the Soviet economy was increasingly sliding into crisis. Given the low priority assigned to consumer goods, it is no surprise that there were shortages of various consumer goods; this problem was compounded by the low quality of such goods (and services) as were available, while drunkenness and absenteeism from work were increasingly absorbing the attention of authorities.

The Constitution of 1977

In 1962, a Constitutional Drafting Commission was appointed and tasked to prepare a new basic document for the country. Four years later,

Brezhnev announced that the new constitution would be ready in time for the fiftieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1967. As it turned out, the final text was approved and adopted only on 7 October 1977—a decade and a half after the commission had begun work on it. Along the way, a draft was presented to the public for a four-month national debate, in which more than 140 million citizens took part, representing 80 percent of the country's adult population.¹⁹³ The commission's work was delayed by a dispute over the status of the union republics. With the acceptance of the idea that the constitution would proclaim the creation of a single "Soviet people," there were some who questioned the rationale for the preservation of the federal system. Ultimately, both positions were reflected in the final draft: while the 1977 constitution reaffirmed the sovereignty of the fifteen union republics, it nonetheless underlined the unified nature of the economy. As Martin Nicholson notes, "The resulting amalgam is frequently ambiguous and sometimes contradictory."¹⁹⁴ This suggests the lack of a consensus on the vision for the Soviet future.

While Western analysts concurred that the 1977 constitution was more notable for its continuity with its 1936 predecessor than for making new departures, there were, all the same, some innovations. To begin with, the earlier constitution had buried its provision concerning the Communist Party in Article 126, where it was stated that "the most active and politically most conscious citizens in the ranks of the working class and other sections of the working people unite in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), which is the vanguard of the working people in their struggle to strengthen and develop the socialist system and is the leading core of all organizations of the working people."¹⁹⁵ By contrast, the 1977 constitution (Article 6) made it clear that the CPSU was "both the organizational 'nucleus' of the system and its sole ideological authority."¹⁹⁶

Second, where the 1936 constitution had declared that the USSR was "a socialist state of workers and peasants,"¹⁹⁷ its 1977 counterpart claimed that the country had reached the stage of "developed socialism" and that it was now "a state of all the people."¹⁹⁸ Thus, it was said to have evolved from "a socialist state of workers and peasants" to a developed socialist state of all the people. Because Marx and Engels—and, for that matter,

Lenin as well—had believed that the state apparatus always served as the instrument for the domination of the ruling class over and against other classes and as machinery to serve the interests of the ruling class over and against the interests of other classes, it followed (as previously noted) that, in strict Marxist terms, there could be no such thing as a state of all the people since, if class differences had been abolished, there would have been no need to preserve the state apparatus. Quite obviously, the new communist leadership was effecting a radical revision of the Marxist-Leninist vision.

Nonetheless, developed socialism, enshrined in the preamble, was now found to be an intermediary stage between *socialism* and *communism*. In line with Marx's understanding of *socialism*, Article 14 declared that "The state exercises its control over the measure of labour and of consumption in accordance with the principle of socialism: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his work.'" ¹⁹⁹ In this new stage of developed socialism, Brezhnev told the USSR Supreme Soviet in reporting on the constitution in October 1977, "a new historical community of people—the Soviet people—has been formed," though he immediately cautioned that "we would be putting ourselves on a dangerous path if we started to speed up artificially this objective process of nations drawing together." ²⁰⁰

Third, the purely nominal guarantees that the republics could maintain their own armed forces and enter into relations with foreign states "directly" ²⁰¹ were now expunged. And fourth, Article 26 of the 1977 constitution introduced a provision that science and scientific research were subject to state control—a provision not found in previous Soviet constitutions. ²⁰² Meanwhile, other provisions promised to consolidate the position of collective farming vis-à-vis state farming (after a period during which there had been serious discussion about converting the former to state farms), ²⁰³ and "to give local authorities a slightly greater say in the activities of centrally subordinated organizations in their locality (Articles 77 and 83)." ²⁰⁴ This new constitution guaranteed citizens, among other things, the rights to remunerative work, rest, healthcare, a pension upon retirement, housing, and an education, as well as the rights to enjoy culture, to participate in public administration, and to complain to state organs and public organizations and to suggest ways

in which they could improve their work. It is worth stressing, however, that, in Marxist and Leninist parlance, rights were established by the state (i.e., positive rights), Marxism-Leninism did not admit the existence of natural rights, and thus, as long as the state followed its own laws, whatever they might stipulate, no citizen or group of citizens could claim that the state was violating their rights. For the Soviets, there were no rights existing outside the framework of the state or independent of the state.²⁰⁵ Freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and public gatherings were guaranteed on condition that they were exercised “in accordance with the interests of the people and in order to strengthen and develop the socialist system”²⁰⁶—a qualification which mirrored that in the 1936 constitution and which explicitly asserted that individual rights were conditioned on their being exercised in the interest of the collective.

Article 60 dealt with the duty to work and is striking in its formulation. “It is the duty of, and [a] matter of honour,” this Article declared, “for every able-bodied citizen of the USSR to work conscientiously in his chosen, *socially useful occupation, and strictly to observe labour discipline. Evasion of socially useful work is incompatible with the principles of socialist society.*”²⁰⁷ Needless to say, it was the Communist Party of the Soviet Union which would determine what was “socially useful” work and what was not. Finally, in what might be interpreted as a nod to the Marxist idea that the state would wither away as citizens took over administrative responsibilities, Article 9 pledged “to maximize progressively the participation of Soviet citizens in the administration of the affairs of state and society.”²⁰⁸

Psychiatric Terror

Few things illustrate so clearly the subordination of the individual to the collective (as defined by the Communist Party) and the negation of individual freedom—central themes in this volume—as the use of psychiatry to deal with dissidents, which developed in the Brezhnev era. In particular, the creation of the Fifth Chief Directorate of the KGB in 1969, for the purpose of combating political dissidence, brought the secret police into a direct and systematic involvement in Soviet psy-

chiatry through the development of the special psychiatric clinics operated by the KGB.²⁰⁹ To run the system of psychiatric terror, Soviet authorities relied on collaborative psychiatrists such as Dr. Andrei Snezhnevsky, head of the Institute of Psychiatry of the Academy of Medical Sciences; these collaborators propagated a theory of “sluggish schizophrenia” under which anyone who was discontented in the socialist paradise or who dared to criticize the authorities could be treated, *ipso facto*, as insane.²¹⁰

Among those incarcerated in Soviet psychiatric clinics and hospitals for political opposition were: General Pyotr G. Grigorenko (1907–87), judged insane after he became a member of a human rights monitoring group in Moscow and started championing the rights of the deported Crimean Tatars; and Leonid Ivanovych Plyushch (1938–2015), diagnosed as suffering from sluggish schizophrenia for his human rights activity and treated for seven to eight months with haloperidol, an antipsychotic drug which seriously damaged his health. Dr. Anatoly Koryagin, who was serving as a consultant psychiatrist in the 1970s, was appointed to a working commission to investigate Western allegations of the misuse of psychiatry for political purposes. He was expected to diagnose political dissidents as mentally ill and thus support the system. Instead, he refused and publicly criticized the abuse of psychiatry in his country. For this, he was arrested (in 1981), charged with “anti-Soviet agitation,” and sentenced to seven years in a labor camp, followed by five years of internal exile.²¹¹

Developed Socialism

In Lenin’s day, the Bolsheviks had promised that, as the society would approach communism, the state would wither away; on this theory, one could speak of a socialist state, during the phase of socialism, but not, strictly speaking, of a communist state, since, once communism would be achieved, the state apparatus would have withered away. Khrushchev had declared publicly in 1961 that the Soviet Union would arrive at the first phase of communism by 1980;²¹² this pledge would be incorporated into the third party program of 1961. At first, the Brezhnev regime

seemed to be following in Khrushchev's steps; thus, in a speech to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, Brezhnev said that the Soviet Union was still engaged in the construction of communism. But all the socialist regimes of Eastern Europe were also said to be constructing communism. Brezhnev wanted to postpone the withering away of the state to the distant future and, at the same time, to suggest that the Soviet Union was somehow farther along than the socialist states of Eastern Europe in the process of building communism, without painting himself into a corner by claiming that the USSR had already achieved full-blown communism. The solution, first broached by a second-level ideologue in 1967, was to proclaim a new category—"developed socialism"—and to declare that the Soviet Union was the *only* country in the world to have reached this august stage of development. By 1971, this new category had become a matter of doctrine and, in his address to the 24th Congress of the CPSU in March of that year, Brezhnev publicly declared that the USSR had attained "developed socialism."

What this meant in practice was that socialism was to be seen henceforth as a "historical stage in its own right" rather than as a mere transition between capitalism and communism.²¹³ Richard Kosolapov, a prominent figure in the Soviet intellectual establishment, offered this elaboration: within the phase of developed socialism, he argued, there were two subphases: in the first of these subphases, state and collective forms of ownership would merge; in the second subphase, the society would become truly classless.

Brezhnev's Final Years

Brezhnev's final years were characterized by a small personality cult (albeit pallid by comparison with Stalin's) and by a proliferation of medals bestowed on him; eventually, Brezhnev had some 114 medals, including the Order of Victory, the country's highest military decoration, which he received in 1978, whereby he became the only person ever to receive the award after 1945. He died on 10 November 1982 of a heart attack and was buried in the Kremlin wall necropolis. His Order of Victory medal was revoked in 1989.

Organization of the Soviet system in the Khrushchev and Brezhnev Eras

The Soviet system was organized through five parallel hierarchies:

- the administrative governmental hierarchy, the chief functions of which were to manage the system and to carry out party directives; its highest organ was the Council of Ministers;
- the representative government hierarchy, staffed according to ethnic and gender quotas with the Supreme Soviet as its highest organ; the chief functions of the representative government hierarchy were to provide pseudo-democratic legitimation and to bring people into active roles in political discourse;
- the party hierarchy, with the Politburo as its highest organ; the chief functions of this hierarchy were to set policies, make decisions, supervise the administrative hierarchy, and oversee transmission belts such as the Komsomol youth organization and the Young Pioneers;
- the security service, responsible to the party (in Stalin's time, the security service was directly responsible to Stalin); its chief functions were to operate as the "sword and shield" and eyes of the party;
- the judicial hierarchy.

Given the severe penalties for mistakes, ranging from job loss and career termination to much worse, functionaries were typically eager to refer decisions to higher authorities.

The Komsomol, founded in October 1918, involved members between ages fourteen and twenty-eight, although its functionaries could be somewhat older. Komsomol provided a mobile pool of labor and political activists, and was used to provide "voluntary" labor for high-profile and low-profile construction projects, as well as to promote voting in the single-candidate elections. The Komsomol played an important role in teaching communist values to its members. Komsomol also served as a recruiting pool for advancement into the Communist Party.

The Young Pioneers were a counterpart to Komsomol for children of ages ten to fifteen and existed between 1922 and 1990. Less political than Komsomol, the Young Pioneers spent much of their time on crafts

and sports. As of 1974, there were about 25 million Young Pioneers in the USSR, which is to say that almost all Soviet children were members of the Young Pioneer organization.

Interregnum, 1982–1985

Although Brezhnev passed away only in November 1982, he was in ill health already by the mid-1970s.²¹⁴ In the last years of Brezhnev's general secretaryship—as in Stalin's last years—key decisions were taken not by the Politburo as a whole, but by an inner circle. From the late 1970s, this inner circle consisted of Mikhail Suslov (until his death in January 1980), Dmitry Fyodorovich Ustinov (1908–84), Andrey Andreyevich Gromyko (1909–89), Yuriy Vladimirovich Andropov (1914–84), Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko (1911–1985), and Brezhnev himself (who was, in fact, the least active of the six). Andropov, Gromyko, and Ustinov had entered the Politburo simultaneously in 1973. After Suslov's death, jockeying for the succession began, with two rival factions headed, respectively, by the reform-minded Andropov and the conservative, status quo-oriented Chernenko.

Brezhnev's death coincided with a growing awareness within the Soviet Union of the economic problems, which were pulling the country toward crisis and threatening the survival of the communist system itself. Andropov, who had served as Soviet ambassador to Hungary (1954–57) and as head of the KGB (1967–82), had been a full member of the Politburo since 1973. In May 1982, he left the KGB to succeed Mikhail Suslov as secretary responsible for ideological affairs; this was the number 2 position in the party hierarchy, right below the general secretary. Subsequently, on 12 November 1982, two days after Brezhnev's death, he was elected general secretary of the CPSU. He served in that office for barely fifteen months, and during much of that time he was hospitalized.

Despite his declining health, Andropov was determined to combat inefficiency, dereliction, and corruption. Where Brezhnev had been loath to dismiss office-holders, Andropov relieved eighteen ministers and thirty-seven obkom first secretaries, as well as other functionaries of their posts. Andropov brought in Nikolay Ryzhkov to serve as a secre-

tary of the Central Committee (in November 1982), put Gorbachev in charge of overseeing the economy as a whole (in December 1982), elevated Heydar Aliiev, a career KGB officer, to full membership in the Politburo, and brought Grigoriy Romanov (1923–2008), already a Politburo member, into the CC Secretariat (in June 1983). He returned Yegor Ligachev (b. 1920) to Moscow, now as chief of the Department of Party Organizational Work (in April 1983). He also initiated criminal cases against high-ranking party and state officials; and he made available to the public facts about economic stagnation and obstacles to scientific progress. He was also concerned about the impact of widespread absenteeism and alcoholism on labor productivity, and introduced measures to combat these problems.

Andropov's idea of reform was to fix the dysfunctionalities in the system without touching the basic structure of the system. Or, to put it another way, he wanted to treat the symptoms without addressing the roots of the problems. Among other things, vigilante patrols of young Komsomols were established at his direction; these patrols inspected restaurants, hair salons, and other public facilities, looking for "shirkers and slackers."²¹⁵ Then, in 1983, a law on labor collectives was passed, which promised to give factory workers some say in the operation of their plants; in actual practice, factory managers were not prepared to allow the workers to discuss much more than the importance of labor discipline and safety at the workplace. According to Ronald Suny, "Andropov's most significant contribution was to promote younger and more vigorous party officials, such as Mikhail Gorbachev, and remove aging Brezhnev holdovers."²¹⁶ Andropov tried to arrange for Gorbachev—who, he believed, shared his concept of the reforms that were needed—to succeed him as general secretary. But conservative Politburo members such as Kazakhstan boss Dinmukhamed Kunaev (1912–93) and Moscow party chief Viktor Grishin (1914–92) were wary that their jobs might not be secure under Gorbachev. They therefore threw their support behind Chernenko.²¹⁷ Andropov died of kidney failure on 9 February 1984 at the age of sixty-nine. Chernenko, a longtime friend of Brezhnev, was elected General Secretary now, while Mikhail Gorbachev, who had served as Andropov's loyal retainer during the preceding fifteen months,

was elected chief of ideology, in essence anointed “crown prince” and heir apparent.

Chernenko had been elected to the Central Committee in 1971, becoming a full member of the Politburo in 1978, at the age of sixty-seven. Chernenko was in declining health at the time of his election, having been diagnosed with emphysema. His energy and vision were limited, he had “little experience in fields other than ideological work, and no previous experience directing an organization,”²¹⁸ and, in the words of a veteran Sovietologist, offered “particularly uninspiring leadership.”²¹⁹ From the very start of his brief term, he reaffirmed the Soviet Union’s commitment to peaceful coexistence with the United States, later seeking to achieve a Soviet-U.S. accord to ban the placement of weapons in outer space.²²⁰ The various reform initiatives set in motion by Andropov were allowed to wither away; Chernenko offered not reform but a return to the “don’t rock the boat” orientation of the Brezhnev era.²²¹ The only major dismissal of Chernenko’s time in office involved General Nikolay Ogarkov, chief of the General Staff, who was fired for having advocated a reduction in spending on consumer goods (and more spending on armaments).

In late 1984, Chernenko’s health started to fail and, in December of that year, Gorbachev delivered a bold speech to a party conference on ideology. It was the most radical speech by a member of the Politburo since Khrushchev’s “secret speech” in 1956. In this speech, Gorbachev called for transforming Soviet doctrine in order to delegitimize the erstwhile way of doing politics in the Soviet Union. Chernenko and his allies were aghast. Less than half of the text was actually published in *Pravda*, although it was published separately in a small booklet.²²² At 7:20 p.m. on 10 March 1985, Chernenko died. At one time both Grishin and Romanov had aspired to the leadership of the CPSU,²²³ but Gromyko and KGB chairman Viktor Chebrikov threw their support behind Gorbachev. Grishin himself came over to the Gorbachev’s camp, perhaps hoping to save his job—he lost it in 1986—and, in the middle of the night, just hours after Chernenko had died, a hurriedly convened session of the Central Committee, to which only 200 of the 300 members were able to arrive in time, elected Gorbachev to serve as chairman of Chernenko’s funeral commission. This was an important signal but it was only the following day that the Politburo officially nominated him as general

secretary; later the same day, the Central Committee unanimously endorsed his elevation to the leadership post. Soviet newspapers carried the news of Chernenko's death on page 2; page 1 was devoted to a report on the Central Committee session that had elected Gorbachev as General Secretary, together with the new leader's biography, and a large photo of Gorbachev.

RIVAL VISIONS 3, Mikhail Gorbachev and the End of the Soviet Union

It is important, at the outset, to understand, as Jack Matlock has put it, that "Gorbachev was not a free agent, able to set a political course and sustain it without opposition from his colleagues in the Politburo."²²⁴ On the contrary, he faced unremitting resistance to his ideas for reform, with the result that domestic policy often—though not always—reflected variously compromise, tactical retreat, or even the defeat of Gorbachev's agenda, forcing him into retreat.²²⁵

That said, Gorbachev entered office with a vision that involved "a major transformation of the [collective] mind."²²⁶ Among other things, Gorbachev noted the gaping disparity between the achievements of Soviet science (e.g., in outer space) and the low quality of many manufactured goods (e.g., refrigerators and television sets). The keynotes of Gorbachev's program gradually emerged, involving:

- glasnost, meaning openness, availability of reliable information, correct maps, access to scientific research, and greater factuality in newspapers;
- perestroika or restructuring, involving an overhaul of the economy and of the political apparatus, an uprooting of corruption, and a raising of standards of quality;
- novoe myshlenie, or new thinking, both domestically and in terms of ideology and values in foreign affairs;
- uskorenie, or acceleration, meaning greater efficiency and more competitiveness;
- pravoe gosudarstvo or a nomocracy or state governed by the rule of law.

At first, Gorbachev's "program did not go beyond the principle of 'everyone should work better,'" according to his adviser, Anatoly Chernyaev.²²⁷ Indeed, upon taking office, Gorbachev believed that the system was reformable and that it was not necessary to change its fundamental institutions and suppositions.²²⁸ It was only three years later that Gorbachev began to embrace a new vision, calling for a much more extensive overhaul of the system.

Yet as early as June 1985, Gorbachev declared that "the acceleration of scientific and technical progress insistently demands a profound reorganization of the system of planning and management and of the entire economic mechanism."²²⁹ Subsequently, addressing the 27th Party Congress in February 1986, Gorbachev expressed his view that "a radical reform is necessary," adding that the entire socialist economy would have to be restructured.²³⁰

Gorbachev's economic reform program, which had been under debate for some years, was approved by the Central Committee in June 1987. A law on socialist enterprise was passed as the cornerstone of perestroika; the law recognized the importance of profitability as the most important factor for efficiency. The law also decentralized economic management and dispersed the power of the State Planning Commission, allowed enterprises to purchase supplies from each other rather than having to go through state agencies, and gave enterprises more say in decisions affecting their operations. To assure an acceleration of economic growth, the Gorbachev government also called for a renovation of industrial plants in order to eliminate waste. Some Soviet economists, such as Tatyana Zaslavskaya and Oleg Bogomolov, wanted more radical reforms and called for the abolition of central planning. Nikolay Shmelyov, who had earlier served as an adviser to his father-in-law, Nikita Khrushchev, was even more radical, and demanded the complete conversion to a market economy.

In administrative practice, Gorbachev called for strict observance of the law by governmental and party organs; for example, early in Gorbachev's incumbency, an article in *Moscow News* exposed local officials for having refused to register a religious community when all the legal prerequisites had been met.

In the literary field, long banned works were published, such as Anatoly Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat* (about the Stalin era), Vasily Grossman's *All is Flux* (about Lenin), and Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago* (which deals with private needs in times of social chaos), as well as Russian translations of George Orwell's novels *Animal Farm* and *1984*, and Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*.

In the religious domain, Gorbachev's government abandoned the official atheism of the previous Soviet rulers and allowed the registration of some 120 new religious parishes in 1987, and more than 1,000 in 1988 (including 700 parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church, 72 Roman Catholic parishes, 48 Islamic communities, 72 Georgian Orthodox parishes, and some Protestant ones). The Seventh Day Adventists were allowed to open a seminary. The Hare Krishnas were allowed to register and to open a temple in Moscow (in May 1989). In Ukraine, the Eastern-rite Catholic Church was relegalized in December 1989. The government also allowed more Bibles to be printed or imported in two years than in the previous forty-three years and, in June 1988, sponsored official celebrations of the millennium of the Christianization of Kievan Rus, with official festivities in Moscow and Kyiv, and additional events in Leningrad and Riga.²³¹ Jews were now allowed to worship freely and to organize their communities openly; the first officially approved Jewish cultural center was opened in the Soviet Union in February 1989.²³²

In the sphere of history and historiography, there was a dramatic reevaluation, to the extent that, in 1988, students were told that their textbooks were blatantly inaccurate and that there would be no exams that year, so that new books could be printed. Bukharin, Rykov, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and even Trotsky were posthumously rehabilitated. Trotsky's key role in the early years of the revolution—denied from the time of Stalin's rise—was now admitted and, in June 1988, Professor Yuri Afanasiev told a press conference that Trotsky should be cleared of all charges and his works republished in the USSR. As regards Stalin, *Moscow News* described (in October 1988) how 100,000 citizens in southwest Ukraine had been murdered in 1941 on Stalin's orders and Soviet authorities finally admitted that it was Stalin, not Hitler, who had been responsible for the mass execution of up to 15,000 Polish POWs in Katyn Forest in the spring of 1940. In October 1988, *Sputnik* magazine com-

pared Stalin to Hitler, while, in January 1989, *Literaturnaya gazeta* published an article admitting that Stalin had masterminded the assassination of Trotsky. This was followed, in May 1989, by *Pravda*'s publication of an official report prepared by a joint Polish-Soviet historical commission, which admitted that there had been a secret protocol in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, dividing up Poland.

Lenin too was now criticized. For example, in June 1988, *Novyi mir* published an article by Vasily Selyunin criticizing the Bolshevik leader for having laid the groundwork for the forced labor camps and for the mechanisms of forced collectivization. Subsequently, instructions were given to the Institute of Marxism-Leninism to publish previously unpublished writings of Lenin, which revealed him as a ruthless tyrant. But, as the spirit of glasnost spread, Gorbachev worried that journal editors and newspaper editors were going too far, too fast; but the initiative now passed to the radicals. Where Gorbachev had envisioned a "partial review of the crimes of Soviet history, the radicals insisted on a complete review of that history ... [as well as] an absolute commitment to free speech."²³³

Gorbachev also succeeded in changing the course of Soviet foreign policy, by withdrawing Soviet troops from Afghanistan,²³⁴ reducing the size of the Soviet army,²³⁵ cooling relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Syria,²³⁶ and fostering better relations with the United States. He also loosened the reins on the members of the Council for Mutual Economic Aid (COMECON), telling the East European regimes to do things their way: this came to be known as the "Sinatra Doctrine," after Frank Sinatra's song, "My Way."²³⁷ All of these measures combined to allow Gorbachev to focus more of his attention on domestic reforms. In addition, in a move designed to please the USA, the Soviet stopped jamming Radio Liberty broadcasts in 1988.²³⁸

The Economic Front

During 1987-88, Gorbachev pushed forward with personnel changes, dismissing some people, transferring some to new posts, and promoting qualified persons whom he trusted. By late summer 1988 (if not before),

Gorbachev's objective had become to effect a transition from a party-governed state to a law-governed state; insofar as he wanted to control this transition, he was reluctant to move too quickly and, specifically, resisted calls from more radical colleagues to abolish the CPSU's monopoly on power.²³⁹ He had managed to replace some of the older (conservative) members of the Politburo with younger supporters of his program and he "reached the peak of his power ... in 1988 and the first half of 1989."²⁴⁰ But it was precisely during these months—actually from June 1987 to summer 1989—that Gorbachev became less focused on economic reform.²⁴¹

And there were obstacles. First, there was the resistance of conservatives at the upper echelons, especially on the part of Nikolay Ryzhkov, Vitaly Vorotnikov, Yegor Ligachev, and Lev Zaikov. Second, although by early 1989 Gorbachev and his entourage understood that it was high time to take the country in a new direction, the problem—at least as Anatoly Chernyaev saw it—was that "nobody knew where to go or how to get there."²⁴² Third, although the Central Statistical Administration was providing information about various problems, such as hidden price increases, declines in the purchasing power of the ruble, increases in the cost of living, and the impact of the shadow economy, it failed to offer any analysis of what these phenomena signified, much less suggest that the country was heading toward economic collapse.²⁴³ Indeed, a joint decree of the CPSU Central Committee and the Council of Ministers of 17 July 1987 pointed out that "The existing statistical system does not fully provide the reliable, timely, profoundly analytical information needed by the authorities in charge of the economy at national, branch and regional levels."²⁴⁴ Fourth, as the costs of the reforms identified with Gorbachev took the economy downhill, with increasing shortages of basic goods, popular support for the reform program flagged.²⁴⁵ Gorbachev conceded as much at a Politburo session on 29 January 1990, telling those present, "People are losing faith. This is no way to do things. And this concerns everyone in this room. If we keep working the same way, we're doomed. The people will get rid of us. Time is the most important thing, [and] we don't have much. Just a few months left. Economic processes are working around us and against us."²⁴⁶ There

were, no doubt, other obstacles as well, including the resistance of ministries, subministries, and agencies to adapt to new guidelines.

In fact, at a subsequent Politburo meeting, on 2 March 1990, Ligachev succeeded in putting a brake on perestroika.²⁴⁷ Gorbachev had survived the so-called Nina Andreeva affair, when Andreeva, a lecturer at a Leningrad chemical institute—apparently with Ligachev’s backing—had published a “neo-Stalinist” attack on Gorbachev’s program in the 13 March 1988 issue of *Sovetskaya Rossiya*.²⁴⁸ Now, however, in the course of 1990, newspapers proved to be vehicles for a rising chorus of panicky predictions, alongside calls for Gorbachev’s resignation.²⁴⁹

Toward Showdown and Collapse

Gorbachev faced criticism both from radicals, for not moving fast enough or far enough, and from conservatives, who charged that he was moving too far, too fast. Ligachev, who had inherited the post of chief ideologist held previously by Chernenko and Gorbachev, favored moderate reform, but feared that the pace of change was too rapid.²⁵⁰ As a result, he became a magnet for discontented conservatives and increasingly served as their mouthpiece. In March 1988, when Gorbachev was in Yugoslavia on an official visit and when his closest ally, Alexander Yakovlev, was also out of the country (in Mongolia), Ligachev and his conservative allies attempted to turn the clock back—making use of Andreeva’s aforementioned article. But on 18 March, Gorbachev returned to Moscow (with Yakovlev following the next day). Gorbachev brought the issue before the Politburo, which backed the General Secretary. There followed a full-page article by Yakovlev, in the 5 April issue of *Pravda*, arguing for the need to press forward with glasnost and perestroika. The Politburo was reshuffled on 30 September 1988, on which occasion Ligachev was demoted from his number 2 position to being chief of agriculture; Chebrikov was removed as KGB chief, and Gromyko and Solomentsev were retired, while Vadim Medvedev, known for his radical speeches, was now brought into the Politburo.²⁵¹ But Gorbachev’s reforms could not bring immediate relief for the deeply rooted economic problems of the realm, and, by the end of the 1980s, there were severe shortages of meat

and sugar across the USSR. At the same time, Eastern Europe was going its own way (with Gorbachev's blessing) and demands for self-determination were being registered in the non-Russian republics (especially in the Baltic republics).

On 15 March 1990, Gorbachev was elected the first executive (as opposed to ceremonial) President of the USSR, with 59 percent of the deputies endorsing him. But public confidence in the party was sinking, manifested in some parts of the country as a "mass exodus" and elsewhere as increasing disinterest in and absenteeism from party meetings.²⁵² In the meantime, by mid-1989, it was clear to many that Gorbachev's idea of market socialism was still not being implemented; the result was that public pressure mounted on the government to embrace "a normal market economy."²⁵³ Instead of honoring this demand, however, the Congress of People's Deputies, meeting in December 1989, adopted a Revitalization Program, which proposed to postpone further reforms for two years, while reinforcing the planning mechanisms, in hopes of balancing the budget.²⁵⁴ But within a month of the program's adoption, its backers realized that it could not be put into practice. A fresh debate ensued, in which proponents of an accelerated transition to a market economy (among them, L. Abalkin, Yu. Masliukov, and S. Sitarian) prevailed. As a result, work was undertaken on a new program, which foresaw the sale of several hundred large state enterprises, using the proceeds to pay off the state debt.²⁵⁵

The first draft of the program was rejected by the presidential council (which existed only from March to November 1990)²⁵⁶ in April 1990. In the meantime, Gorbachev was meeting frequently with his economic adviser, Nikolay Petrakov, an advocate of marketization. Petrakov solicited a working paper from Grigoriy Yavlinsky, a young economist, and shortly thereafter Gorbachev telephoned Boris Yeltsin (1931–2007), then chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, to suggest the formation of a joint (USSR-Russian republic) commission to draw up a program for radical economic transformation. The commission was duly appointed and the document produced by this commission came to be known as the "500 Days Program," setting various targets to be met within the timeframe indicated.²⁵⁷ As Yevgenii Yasin has explained, no one actually believed

that 500 days would suffice to erect a market economy, but the idea was that the foundations of a market economy could be laid within that timeframe.²⁵⁸ In any event, Gorbachev later distanced himself from the 500 Days program and, instead, threw his support behind the moderate Ryzhkov plan.²⁵⁹

In the meantime, Gorbachev's thinking evolved, with the result that, by 1990, he had embraced competitive elections and adopted *de facto* a social democratic outlook.²⁶⁰ Acting on Gorbachev's proposal, the Politburo agreed, in February 1990, to remove the reference to the leading role of the CPSU from the USSR Constitution.²⁶¹ By the time of the 28th CPSU Congress in July 1990, the party was experiencing serious financial problems; indeed, in the course of 1990, party membership plunged by 14 percent, which in turn led to a decline in revenue from membership dues.²⁶² Morale among the rank and file was also sinking. Indeed, surveys among party members in May 1990 found that more than half "no longer saw the party as the leading political force in the country," while "only 12 per cent unambiguously believed that the present government could extricate the country from the economic crisis."²⁶³

By late 1990, Gorbachev had become convinced of the need to renegotiate the terms of the federation and likewise of the need to cooperate with Boris Yeltsin to that end. Four successive drafts of a Union Treaty were prepared—published in November 1990 and in March, June, and August 1991. With each successive draft, more powers were being devolved to the republics. When the final draft was published on 14 August 1991, party hardliners decided that it was time to act.²⁶⁴ Thus, on 18 August 1991, a group of hardliners (Gennady Yanayev, Vladimir Kryuchkov, Marshal Dmitry Yazov, Valentin Pavlov, and Boris Pugo) staged a coup, deposing Gorbachev and placing him under house arrest. Yanayev (1937–2010), as erstwhile vice president, now declared that he was replacing Gorbachev as president (on the pretext that Gorbachev was ill) and promised to restore old-style communism. Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin (1931–2007), who had been elected president of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic on 12 June 1991 (defeating Vadim Bakatin, Gorbachev's preferred candidate),²⁶⁵ raced to the so-called White House, the residence of the Supreme Soviet, in order to face down the putschists. Standing on top of a tank in front of the White

House, Yeltsin made a memorable speech and rallied Russians who feared a return to communism. By 22 August 1991, the coup had collapsed. After the coup had been defeated, Yeltsin signed a decree banning the Communist Party from operating in the security police and removed the control of Russia's natural resources from central government ministries. Between 21 August and 22 September 1991, Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan declared their independence. On 23 December 1991, Gorbachev met with Yeltsin and agreed to declare the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev abdicated on 25 December and the Soviet Union officially ceased to exist on 1 January 1992. The successor states would move quickly to abandon communism and build new systems—whether representative democracies or corrupt plutocracies or authoritarian systems committed to rather different programs.

TALLYING UP THE LEGACY OF COMMUNISM

Despite the Soviet commitment to equality across a number of dimensions, actual practice fell short of aspirations. It may be granted that, by the 1970s, there was less class inequality in the Soviet Union than there was at the time in the major Western states.²⁶⁶ Yet in the early 1940s, at the height of the Stalin era, peasants on collective farms were earning only about half of what industrial workers earned.²⁶⁷ Again, in the Stalin era, creative workers (book authors, playwrights, composers) earned at least forty-three times as much as factory workers.²⁶⁸ Moreover, inequalities of earnings persisted into the post-Stalin era. It is true that between 1956 and 1968 earnings in the USSR became steadily more equal. But income disparities widened once again during the years after 1968, only to become relatively more equal once more between 1975 and 1981.²⁶⁹ Turning to gender equality, however, the Soviet record is unimpressive. At the end of the Khrushchev era, for example, Soviet women earned on average 65 percent of what Soviet men earned—a figure that matches exactly income disparity in France for the same year.²⁷⁰ At the same time, Central Asians lagged behind Russians in income.²⁷¹ Finally, if social, linguistic, and religious homogenization and

the atheization of the Soviet population were to be understood as the keys to success in achieving something approaching full equality, then the manifest failure of these programs²⁷² is indicative of the broader failure of the Soviet quest for equality.

The historical record also shows that the Soviet notion that the rule of law could be reconciled with the supremacy of the dictator (Stalin) or of the Politburo (for the post-Stalin era) was either illusory or dishonest, and that the previously mentioned notion that human freedom could be best realized in a one-party state was, at a minimum, not confirmed. Indeed, the evidence suggests that a one-party state, regardless of its principles and objectives, is intrinsically, and not merely accidentally, incompatible with the realization of any meaningful form of freedom.

Turning to other policy spheres, there was some variation in the communist world. For example, although agricultural collectivization was regarded, in the Soviet Union, as an essential element of the socialist system, Poland and Yugoslavia left more than 85 percent of arable land in the hands of private farmers. Again, although religion was considered to offer a rival ideological system, only Albania ever banned religion totally, although the Chinese communists closed down many churches, temples, and mosques during the decade-long Cultural Revolution (1966–76), closing seminaries for all faiths, and terminating religious periodicals.²⁷³ Or again, although the active role of a Communist Party is usually a key expectation in communist systems, in the case of Cuba, ruled by Fidel Castro after 1959, it was only in 1975 that the local Communist Party became active. Or again, although a personality cult is a typical feature of communist systems, János Kádár (1912–89), the modest communist leader of Hungary from 1956 to 1988, quickly advised his colleagues in the party that they did not need to sprinkle their speeches with praise for his wisdom. Or again, in China today, the ruling Communist Party is actively promoting economic capitalism, thereby abandoning a key element in the traditional communist program. Or again, while prepublication censorship was the general rule in communist systems, in the German Democratic Republic and socialist Yugoslavia, authorities used a system of postpublication censorship, which meant that, if there was something wrong with an issue of a news-

paper, for example, the issue would be confiscated and would have to be reprinted without the offending article.

But in acknowledging the variation in communist systems, one should not lose sight of what they had in common. The organizational monopoly, for example, meant that organizations such as the Boy Scouts (or Girl Scouts) or Kiwanis or Rotary or even private stamp-collecting clubs were not allowed to function; the complete absence of legally sanctioned independent associations is why some people say that there was no such thing as “civil society” in the traditional communist systems. The censorship covered not only content but also form, so that one was expected to express one’s thoughts in a communist way, using highly ritualized vocabulary; this rule was relaxed for children’s publications and for highly specialized publications such as philatelic magazines. With the exception of socialist Yugoslavia, travel was also controlled, since the authorities feared that, if the borders were opened, people with skills would leave and never return. In general the system operated on the supposition that, since the state controlled basically everything, it was the duty of the state to provide everything necessary for life. This led to a strong tendency for people to blame the state for problems of supply and distribution, for example, but also to look to the state to assure those commodities and services that they wanted.

For these and other reasons, communism has also left a clear legacy. As James Millar and Sharon Wolchik have noted,

... the patterns of political organization, economic development, and social transformation associated with communist systems have had a major impact on the social structure and on social relations in the former Soviet Union and the formerly communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. One-party rule, a command economy, and the effort to control information and culture also resulted in a situation in which a variety of social problems common to developed countries have manifested themselves in distinct ways in the erstwhile communist world ... At the same time, the social legacies of communist rule continue to condition the transition to postcommunist political systems and economies, as do the social changes that have accompanied the transition.²⁷⁴

CONCLUSION—THE EVOLVING VISION

In Soviet times, it was standard practice that history books reflected political fortunes, and, as once-important figures fell into disgrace or were liquidated, they would disappear from the books; at the same time, those whose stars had risen were given more prominent places in history books. This gave rise to a witticism among critics—possibly a “25-year joke”²⁷⁵—that the past is constantly changing, but the future stays forever the same. In fact, however, the communist vision of the future was constantly in flux. To begin with, Marx had believed that, under socialism, the state would construct communism and gradually wither away. But, under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, a new intermediary stage—developed socialism—was introduced between socialism and communism, in effect postponing the withering away of the state and thus also the arrival of communism into the indefinite future. Second, Marx and Engels made overcoming alienation the center of their revolutionary program; alienation received lip service from Stalin and disappeared completely from the political vision of Khrushchev and his successors. Third, in the early days of Bolshevik Russia, experiments were made with a conductorless orchestra, the abolition of ranks in the military, and the establishment of a Bureau of Free Love, reflecting a vision of a future without hierarchy and without regulation of people’s sexual lives; these experiments were soon scrapped, as the Bolsheviks returned to more traditional ways of doing business.

Fourth, the Bolsheviks originally viewed all law as “bourgeois” and thought that they could do away with law in the traditional sense; although this early delusion survived in the form of comrades’ courts handling lesser infractions, the Bolsheviks quickly decided that not all law was bourgeois and started to rehabilitate what they now called *socialist law*. And finally, Marx and Engels had thought that religion and ethnic differences would gradually fade away of their own accord, and that coercion to produce that effect was not necessary; they believed, thus, that in the future ethnicity and religion would naturally lose importance. The early Left-wing Bolsheviks were not convinced of this and, by the end of the 1920s, the Stalin regime was set on a tough antireligious course, which let up only during World War II. But

Khrushchev inherited the vision of a future free of religion and, like Stalin, doubted that it would fade away by itself, as Marx and Engels had predicted. This antireligious course remained a staple of Soviet policy, in varying degrees of intensity, from the Khrushchev era to the end of Chernenko's general secretaryship in 1985. With the death of Chernenko and the arrival of Gorbachev as head of the CPSU, the Marxist-Leninist vision of a future with thriving collective farms, the withering away of ethnic feeling, the disappearance of religious faith, and the withering away of the state itself was finally and resolutely abandoned. It was not the state that had withered away, thus, but rather the Marxist vision of the future.

Notes

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CHAPTER 3

The Quest for an Alternative Modernity: Fascism and Nazism **Part I**

Fascism and Nazism are totalitarian ideologies that place an emphasis on individuals' total obedience to the state, reject the rule of law in favor of the rule by the leader, justify themselves on the claim that they realize the interests of the collective, define that collective in national or racial terms, and seek to promote the palingenesis or rebirth of the community by remaking human nature and thereby constructing a new civilization. As such, both Italian Fascism and German Nazism promoted ideologies of total national regeneration, which by its nature entailed the suppression or liquidation of groups viewed as obstacles to the process of renewal. Fascist Italy did not join Nazi Germany in the systematic murder of Jews, Roma, homosexuals, the mentally infirm, the physically handicapped, and others whom the Nazis deemed "life unworthy of life" or, in other words, unfit to be included in the reborn national community. Nonetheless, both systems resorted to collusion with the Christian Churches rather than their persecution, although, of the two, only Nazi Germany sought to force Christians into collaboration, by sponsoring a religious Trojan horse (the German Christian Movement) and set about revising and modifying Christian teaching to suit Nazi ideas. In the sphere of culture, the Italian Fascists adopted a strategy of "hegemonic pluralism," while the Nazi leaders, even while arguing among themselves over control of cultural policy, imposed draconian control on cultural production to enforce conformity with their own not always consentaneous concepts.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, fascism—especially in its Italian incarnation between 1922 and 1938—exerted a magnetic attraction for many persons both in the countries where the Italian Fascists and the German Nazis took power and also elsewhere. They offered what Erich Fromm would later call an "escape from freedom"¹—which

is to say an escape from individual responsibility. For some, this surrender of responsibility to the state and of any duty to think for oneself and to associate with a history-making political movement was attractive, for others profoundly repellent. The Fascists and Nazis made promises of a better tomorrow just around the historical corner, and they conjured the past in a way which brought history to life, enabling people to believe that they were living, somehow, transhistorically or, as Mussolini would say, beyond “time and space.” The Italian excavations of ancient Roman sites, like the Nazi German rebuilding (in a new style) of the medieval castle at Trifels, gave people a feeling of being on a historical trajectory stretching from a heroic past into an even more heroic future. For those convinced by the fascists (lower case signifying “generic fascists,” which is to say both Italian Fascists and German Nazis, as well as their political kin in other countries), the fascist state’s repudiation of individual rights was not only an acceptable price to pay, but positively desirable in its own right.

Fascism outlined a grand vision of the future, but it failed miserably in several ways. First, by persecuting any persons it considered undesirable—Jews, homosexuals, the handicapped, and so on—the fascists created states literally founded on repression and persecution. Second, while both the Fascist and the Nazi regimes promised unity, order, and stability, neither was able to deliver on this triune promise. In fact, as will be noted in the following chapter, the Nazi state was characterized from the beginning by internal rivalries, disunity, and disorder, which constantly threatened to destabilize the state the moment the repressive apparatus might relax. Third, given that expansion and conquest were built into their self-conception, the fascist regimes in Italy and Germany were geared for war, resulting in huge human casualties and staggering economic losses in belligerent countries on both sides of the conflict. Fourth, the fascist regimes did not survive the war, ending up, as Leon Trotsky once said, “in the dustbin of history.”

When it comes to human casualties, the greatest tragedy was the Holocaust, in which an estimated 6 million Jews were liquidated by the Nazis. But this was a price Adolf Hitler and his henchmen were more than ready, indeed eager, to pay. “You call us agents of destruction,” Joseph Goebbels (1897–1945), the Nazi minister of propaganda, once

said. “Children of the revolution is what we call ourselves, trembling with enthusiasm ... [W]e are determined to destroy this system at all costs.”² The revolution the Nazis and Fascists sought to carry out was to abolish, among other things, the boundary between public and private, so that “everything had to be public, and everything had to be regulated by a higher morality, a “warrior ethic of sacrifice.”³

Where liberal democratic systems have emphasized the accountability of the rulers to the ruled, pluralism in politics and all spheres of society, religious toleration, the rule of law, and individual rights, the Fascist regime in Italy (1922–43) and the Nazi regime in Germany (1933–45) repudiated any concept of accountability, demanded uniformity in politics, rejected the rule of law in favor of rule by the leader (in conformity with the “leader principle”), and subordinated the individual to the state. Nazi Germany went even further by rejecting any form of pluralism in society, by seeking to control and mold religious life, and by adopting a genocidal policy of exterminating those whom the Nazis considered to have “lives unworthy of life.” In terms of the themes of this book, this means that the Fascist and Nazi regimes chose obedience to the ruling party over individual freedom, the interests of the collective (as determined by the leader) over the interests of individuals, the will of the leader over the rule of law, and social hierarchy and intolerance rather than social equality and toleration. When it comes to the religious sphere, there was a clear difference—in Catholic Italy, Mussolini needed to make peace with the Holy See, whereas in religiously divided Germany, the Nazi party sponsored a German Christian Movement among Protestants, hoping to enlist them in support of a Nazified version of Christianity, even while some Nazis nurtured ideas of reviving a version of the old Nordic polytheist religion.

In approaching the subject of Fascism and Nazism, we are confronted by the still unresolved controversy as to whether they should be seen as having been two manifestations of one and the same political phenomenon, or whether they were, rather, two distinct phenomena. Each of these views has had its champions, but there have been certain tendencies in the years since 1932. In the period between the Nazi accession to power through the elections of 1932 and the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, there was a strong tendency among scholars to view

Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) and Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) as political cousins. Franz L. Neumann's *Behemoth* exemplified this approach.⁴ But under the impact of World War II, in which the contrast between Hitler's transcontinental ambitions and Mussolini's regional (Mediterranean) ambitions became obvious, and in the context of revelations about the Holocaust, as well as about Nazi cruelty toward gays and lesbians, Roma, the infirm, the developmentally delayed, and those defined as tramps, there was a general reassessment. To scholars such as Hannah Arendt, it seemed apparent that the Nazi Third Reich could be compared only, at most, to Stalin's regime, both of which she considered totalitarian, and, therefore, that Italian Fascism, despite Mussolini's claim to have constructed a "totalitarian" regime, fell far short of that stated ideal.⁵

DEBATES ABOUT FASCISM

The field of fascist studies has been divided, with disputes about whether fascism was revolutionary or reactionary; whether it could best be seen as the offspring of the conservative/elitist wing of liberalism (oriented, thus, to saving capitalism) or rather as involving a repudiation of the entire liberal tradition; whether it was a modernizing movement, seeking to fashion an alternative modernity rather than intrinsically antimodern; whether Italian Fascism and German Nazism should be seen as closely related members of a common genus or rather as genetically distinct; and whether it makes sense to employ the word "totalitarian" in relation to generic fascism or, for that matter, to Stalinism, Pol Pot's genocidal regime in Kampuchea, Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, or any other regime in history. I examine each of these disputes in seriatim. But rather than keeping the reader in suspense, I shall spell out my own view immediately. In agreement with Roger Griffin, Emilio Gentile, and Constantin Iordachi, I view fascism as a revolutionary movement embracing both Italian Fascism and German Nazism, which repudiated the entire liberal tradition, seeking to construct "an alternative modernity and temporality ... based on the rebirth, or palingenesis, of the nation."⁶ I shall also argue that it makes sense to employ the word "totalitarian," provided that one provides and adheres to a clear definition

of the term, and that there is no advantage to be gained by trying to purge the word from our vocabulary.

Revolutionary or Reactionary

The argument that fascism was a reactionary movement driven by the desire to shore up capitalism and preserve the bourgeois order is one which has been advanced by Marxist scholars, although at least some non-Marxist scholars accepted this argument in the decades immediately following World War II.⁷ One may count Daniel Woodley, David Renton, and Peter Osborne among Marxist scholars adhering to this interpretation. For Woodley, only a Marxist revolution, in which the proletariat overthrows the bourgeoisie, counts as truly revolutionary. Accordingly, for Woodley, “the misidentification of fascism and revolution in revisionist historiography is explained by an inadequate theoretization of the true function of fascist myth as a *collective act of disavowal*, that is to say, as ‘simulacra’ of mastery to overcome the emasculation and impotence of late bourgeois culture.”⁸ Woodley also offers a definition of *revolution* as “the overthrow of a system of political organization, leading to transformation of the social relations of production.”⁹ Since neither the Italian Fascist regime nor the German Nazi regime produced that result, according to Woodley, it follows for him that neither of those regimes can be classified as having been revolutionary. Renton, for his part, restricts the term *revolution* “to moments of historical change which ‘provide *both* greater fairness *and* the actuality of participation.’ Only such moments,” according to Renton, “deserve to be called ‘revolutionary.’”¹⁰ Osborne agrees with this verdict, interpreting fascism as entailing “counterrevolution,” that is, as an effort to thwart communist revolution.¹¹ Or again, for Nicos Poulantzas, the fascist state belongs to the category of capitalist states, but it was an exceptional form of capitalist politics and what was specific to it was the relative autonomy of the fascist state from the economic-industrial barons.¹²

Against this view, Roger Griffin, Emilio Gentile, George Mosse, and Wolfgang Sauer—among others—have all argued that the fascist movements were indeed revolutionary in both intent and effect.¹³ Griffin’s

definition of *fascism*, which might well be the longest definition of the term offered to date is not only the most comprehensive but also the most illuminating, making clear how and why fascism may be considered revolutionary. Here is his definition, as given in his 2007 classic, *Modernism and Fascism*:

Fascism is a revolutionary species of political modernism originating in the early twentieth century whose mission is to combat the allegedly degenerative forces of contemporary history (decadence) by bringing about an alternative modernity and temporality (a “new order” and a “new era”) based on the rebirth or palingenesis of the nation. Fascists conceive the nation as an organization shaped by historic, cultural, and in some cases, ethnic and hereditary factors, a mythic construct incompatible with liberal, conservative, and communist theories of society. The health of this organism they see undermined as much by the principles of institutional and cultural pluralism, individualism, and globalized consumerism promoted by liberalism as by the global regime of social justice and human equality identified by socialism in theory as the ultimate goal of history, or by the conservative defence of “tradition.” ... [Concretely,] fascism is a form of programmatic modernism that seeks to conquer political power in order to realize a totalizing vision of national or ethnic rebirth. Its ultimate end is to overcome the decadence that has destroyed a sense of communal belonging and drained modernity of meaning and transcendence and usher in a new era of cultural homogeneity and health.¹⁴

Having defined totalitarianism as entailing, among other things, the aim “to shape the individual and the masses through an anthropological revolution in order to regenerate the human being and create the new man,”¹⁵ Emilio Gentile offers a compatible definition of *fascism*, identifying it as “a modern political phenomenon, which is nationalistic and revolutionary, anti-liberal and anti-Marxist ... with a totalitarian conception of political and the State, with an ideology based on myth.”¹⁶

The Fascists and Nazis certainly were committed to making revolution. Mussolini, for example, declared in 1932: “The Fascist State ... is not reactionary, but revolutionary, for it anticipates the solution of cer-

tain universal problems which have been raised elsewhere.”¹⁷ Speaking for the Third Reich, Joseph Goebbels, the minister of propaganda, boasted that the Nazis had “carried out the Revolution to the logical conclusion.”¹⁸

Ultimately, whether fascism qualifies as revolutionary depends on one’s definition of *revolution*. In a 1997 publication, I suggested that the sociopolitical order may be seen as anchored in three putative principles of legitimacy, these being moral, political, and economic. The moral principle may be theocratic or secular-theocratic (to use a term employed by Zbigniew Brzezinski to refer to Stalinism) or universalist (as in classical liberalism) or conventionalist (legalistic) or consequentialist or relativistic. The political principle is tied to the method by which political succession is managed, whether by direct popular election or indirect election or internal coalition building (as in the Soviet case) or hereditary succession—as Guglielmo Ferrero has explained.¹⁹ And the economic principle identifies how the economic system is organized and controlled, with “capitalism, socialism, and, somewhat less obviously, solidarism” as the chief alternatives today. I have defined *solidarism* as “a mixed economy in which the society is characterized by strong currents of mutual caring and mutual aid and in which the state plays an active role in assuring a basic equality of opportunity, providing corrective action where necessary (for example, through affirmative action), and curtailing the tendency of the rich to aggrandize their wealth indefinitely.”²⁰ Based on this paradigm, I have defined *revolution* as “a change in any of the components of social order, that is, as a change in the principles of legitimation and order underpinning a political system.”²¹ A revolution need not be violent or compressed within a short period of time, even though typically revolutions tend to involve violence. If there is change in all three principles of the social order, we may call it a *comprehensive revolution*; if change is realized in two principles of the social order, we may call it a *partial revolution*; and if only one principle of the social order is changed, we may call it a *limited revolution*. On this understanding, the Russian Revolution was a *comprehensive* revolution, in that it involved a transformation from a sociopolitical order based on Christian morality, hereditary monarchy, and incipient capitalism—under the motto “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality”—to a new

system based on secular theocracy (with Stalin figuring as a substitute for God, and the Communist Party as a surrogate for the Christian Church), one-party rule, and a controlled and planned economy. What both the Fascists of Italy and the Nazis of the Third Reich undertook was to overthrow traditional morality and erect a system in which the moral principle was that “the State is absolute, individuals and groups relative.”²² In terms of politics, it is scarcely disputable that the destruction of pluralism, accomplished more rapidly in Nazi Germany than in Italy, involved the replacement of one principle of political order with another. And finally, where the economic principle is concerned, we have Hitler’s word that “The most bitter fight would not have to be fought against enemy peoples, but against international finance capital.”²³ Commenting on the record of both the Italian Fascist and the German Nazi regimes, Luciano Pellicani writes, “fascism and capitalism are two antithetical realities. If the principles of the first prevail, the principles of the second—full property rights, absolute freedom to buy and sell according to the laws of the market, the logic of profit and competition, etc.—are inevitably seriously restricted, if not annihilated altogether.”²⁴

Offspring of Liberalism/Capitalism or Repudiation of Liberalism

What is at stake in this dispute—which is closely related to the dispute about fascism’s revolutionary character—is nothing less than the alleged intrinsic vulnerability of pluralist systems to fascist corruption and the construal of fascism as an outgrowth of the liberal/capitalist system. Max Horkheimer, in an essay on “The Jews and Europe,” denied that fascism sought to effect a radical break with liberalism and insisted that, on the contrary, the ideas that sprouted in fascist regimes had been sown in “the order that emerged in 1789.”²⁵ Danilo Breschi explains that Marxists have always insisted that there is an organic and even causal link between liberalism and fascism—a view which Breschi rejects, asserting against it that fascism sought to break with liberalism.²⁶ For Ishay Landa, fascism grew organically out of liberalism which, in his view, has not sustained a consistent or long-term commitment to either democracy or civil rights.²⁷

From a liberal point of view, the notion that fascism bears an organic, even symbiotic, relationship to liberalism/capitalism arises from the record of collaboration between the Italian Fascists and German Nazis, on the one side, and preexisting economic-industrial elites and military elites, on the other.²⁸ But one key observation must be recorded, namely, that this short-term collaboration was at variance with the stated long-term objectives of the fascist regimes in Italy and Germany. In the long term, the fascist regimes aspired to build controlled economies and to use the mechanisms of the *ancien régime* precisely to subvert, undermine, and destroy the old order. This was clearest in the case of the Third Reich; in Italy, as Aristotle Kallis has pointed out, the formal establishment of Fascism in January 1925, while it “involve[d] the gradual marginalization of traditional elite groups,” nonetheless maintained King Victor Emmanuel III’s position as head of state, meaning that Mussolini was formally subordinate to the crown.²⁹

Landa’s jousting rival was Zeev Sternhell, who characterized fascism as a revolutionary form of antiliberal thought. For Sternhell, the core of the fascist concept was the complete subordination of the liberty of individuals to “the liberty of the state,” of individual interests to the interests of the state, and the elimination of antagonistic interests, which could be accomplished only by denying the autonomy of any interests save those of the state.³⁰ Salvatore Garau takes the same line as Sternhell, identifying fascism as “a fully formed, revolutionary, anti-liberal and anti-capitalist ideology.”³¹ It may be granted, of course, that conservatives, reactionaries, and capitalists would have had every reason to try to exploit fascism for their own purposes, while the fascists nurtured their own purposes and sought to serve their own interests.³² It is true that capitalist enterprises continued to function in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, but, as Stanley Payne has noted, these regimes sought to establish extensive control over “private” enterprise in their respective countries, suffocating the autonomy of large industrial concerns, and harnessing industrial output to the demands of autarky and a powerful industrial-military complex.³³ Furthermore, as Roger Eatwell has put it, referring to the Italian case, the Fascists “defended private property” but did not consider it “sacrosanct.”³⁴ It is for such reasons that, at least among liberals, as Roger Griffin was claiming already in 1997, a new consensus

has emerged within comparative fascist studies, or at least a high measure of scholarly convergence on several key points relating to fascist ideology and its nature as a sociopolitical project. One of the central axioms of this convergence is that all “true” fascists were committed to fashioning a third way between liberalism/capitalism and communism as the solution to the problems of modernity.³⁵

Finally, we may understand by *liberalism* a political creed, ultimately deriving from the Enlightenment commitment to rationality, empirical science, and tolerance, that emphasizes the rule of law, individual rights, toleration, respect for the harm principle, basic human equality, and the neutrality of the state in matters of religion.³⁶ By contrast, fascism, with its heralding of rule by the leader (Führer, Duce, Poglavnik), the priority of the rights of the race or nation, intolerance of designated out-groups, rejection of the harm principle (the principle, articulated by John Stuart Mill that one may not inflict harm on another except in defense of oneself or an innocent person or animal being attacked³⁷) as well as of the principle of equality, and intention to use religion as a political instrument to create a national community, must surely be seen, not as an outgrowth of liberalism, but as a complete and total repudiation of every principle of liberalism.

Modernizing or Antimodern

There are several reasons why some scholars have construed historical fascism as antimodern. For Luciano Pellicani, its “organicism” and its promotion of “the age of the communal We” suggest a yearning for a premodern age. He also quotes Domenico Settembrini’s claim that Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany shared “a violent hostility against the spirit of modernity.”³⁸ Ernst Nolte is perhaps the dean of the antimodernists; for Nolte, fascism should be seen as having been no less than a revolt against modernity, or rather the spirit of emancipation and transcendence that he equates with modernity.³⁹ Nolte’s book was first published in German in 1963, when it was commonplace to treat fascism as irrational, lacking a coherent ideology or vision, and motivated largely or even purely by a lust for power. Indeed, in the early 1960s, the pre-

vailing opinion was that fascism was antimodern and ideologically vacuous, so that his book is still seen as groundbreaking for the serious attention he paid to the ideology and mobilizing vision of fascism.

For more recent defenses of the thesis that fascism was antimodern, one may turn to the published essays of Henry Turner⁴⁰ and Sandro Bellassai.⁴¹ According to Turner, the Nazis believed that the development and expansion of industry was damaging to folk culture, which they professed to value. In his view, the Nazis looked to the past—one would say, the distant past—for models; accordingly, they can only be seen as having advocated “a utopian form of anti-modernism.”⁴² Turner cites an unpublished manuscript of 1928, in which Hitler described cities as “abscesses on the body of the folk (*Volkskörper*), in which all vices, bad habits and sicknesses seem to unite.”⁴³ Averse to urban life, the Nazis wanted to reverse the flight from the countryside to the cities and this, according to Turner, explains Hitler’s interest in eastward expansion, which, he says, was driven above all by the desire “to end Germany’s dependence on imported foodstuffs and thereby eliminate the need to produce industrial goods for export.”⁴⁴ In this way, the Nazi regime could effect the deindustrialization of Germany, promote reruralization, and effect some form of demodernization.

Bellassai’s focus, by contrast, is on the Italian Fascist regime which, he claims, used antimodern rhetoric in support of an antimodern program, at least where gender relations were concerned.⁴⁵ The Fascist regime certainly wanted to roll back women’s participation in teaching, as well as in the professions and even in office work, while tolerating women’s employment in traditionally feminine sectors such as the textile industry and the food industry. Bellassai concludes by arguing that “the connection between gender and antimodernism shows the very importance of the concept of gender in catalyzing a wide consensus among heterogeneous social spheres.”⁴⁶

Finally, for scholars favoring an interpretation of fascism as antimodern, there is the fact of Mussolini’s incorporation of facets of ancient Roman symbology, including the fasces, into the symbology of his regime and his intense interest in archeological excavations of ancient Roman sites, ranging from Ostia Antica to Herculaneum to Caligula’s pleasure boats sunk at the bottom of Lake Nemi (discussed later in this

chapter). Hitler's fascination with medieval Germany has also been noticed, and his aforementioned rebuilding, albeit in a romanticized reinvention, of the castle at Trifels reveals a certain interest in the past. But does anyone really believe that Mussolini wanted to return Italy to a recognizably ancient state, or that Hitler dreamed of resurrecting the Middle Ages in the Third Reich? And if these sound—as they should—completely preposterous, even unimaginable, then something else must have been going on, something involving what historians have called the search for a “usable past.”⁴⁷

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), the self-described philosopher of Being who aspired to be the court philosopher of the Third Reich,⁴⁸ once explained how he thought of the chronology of human action. In his view, thinking in terms of past-present-future was irrelevant to explaining human action. He proposed rather that we should think in terms of future–past–present as the mental chronology underlying human action. This may be illustrated with a very mundane example. Say that one wishes to bake a very special cake for one's spouse's birthday next Tuesday (i.e., in the future). One thinks back to some excellent cakes one has enjoyed previously (in the past) and then draws up a list of ingredients one needs to purchase in order to bake the cake on which one has decided (in the present). This is precisely the mental chronology characteristic of fascism. As Roger Griffin has explained, the fascists were modernizers—in culture, politics, architecture, fashions, and so on—seeking to construct an *alternative modernity*, which is to say an alternative to liberal/capitalist or communist forms of modernity. Thus, “the invocation of the glories of bygone era had nothing to do with nostalgia,” let alone any atavistic drive to revive bygone days; “the past ... was a reservoir of revitalizing myths needed to construct an alternative modernity for Italy,”⁴⁹ which he has described elsewhere as a “rooted modernism.” As Heidegger would say, having started down the wrong path ages ago, we need to retrace our steps and resume our march to modernity down a completely different path; one cannot expect that one can merely take a detour from the path on which one has been proceeding. Moreover, as Woodruff Smith has explicated, projecting images of an idyllic past can serve effectively to motivate people to commit to the construction of an alternative future,⁵⁰ in which some of

the elements of that reimagined past may be present, if only symbolically, transfigured, and/or reinterpreted. Ruth Ben-Ghiat,⁵¹ A. James Gregor,⁵² Kevin Passmore,⁵³ and Zeev Sternhell⁵⁴ are among those scholars who have reached the same conclusion as Griffin and Gentile that fascism was modernist in spirit, seeking, as Sternhell has put it, “to lay the foundation of a new civilization.”⁵⁵ Constantin Iordachi, who may be counted as subscribing to the new consensus, has noted that, while promoting “the creation of the new men through spiritual regeneration, new forms of socialization, and education, corporatism, and a new style of charismatic leadership,” (generic) fascists also promoted a utopian vision with both “regressive” and “futurist” aspects.⁵⁶ In elucidating fascism’s aspiration to steer world history in a new direction and thereby construct an alternative, fascist modernity, Ben-Ghiat has drawn attention to the Italian Fascists’ ambition to change the habits, tastes, behaviors, prejudices, and inclinations of Italians, thereby conquering the souls of Italians.⁵⁷

How the fascists presumed to go about realizing this vision has been effectively outlined by Roger Griffin, who points out the importance for the fascists of “purg[ing] civilization of decadence, and foster[ing] the emergence of a new breed of human beings.”⁵⁸ In a word, “the Fascist regime was neither reactionary nor antimodern, but *modernist*.”⁵⁹ This new, alternative future would unfold, like a rose coming to full bloom, through a process of spiritual rebirth, or *palingenesis*,⁶⁰ and cultural policy would therefore have a role to play in all of this. Not everyone has subscribed to Griffin’s new consensus. Richard Bosworth, for example, has criticized Griffin, Emilio Gentile, and other like-minded scholars, calling them “culturalists” and rejecting the utility of the term “totalitarian” to describe the ambition of the Italian Fascists and the German Nazis alike “to create the human species anew.”⁶¹ But the Fascists and Nazis alike did not merely boast about being “the bearers of a new type of civilization” aiming at the total regeneration of humankind.⁶² On the contrary, they suppressed art of which they did not approve (the “degenerate art” of the Nazis); promoted art, music, and literature that they believed would move them closer to realizing their vision (whether directly or indirectly); reimagined city architecture; promoted scientific-technological innovation (especially where of military relevance); and, in the case of the Nazis, manipulated religion, pushing it in an Aryan

direction (as detailed in the following chapter); and posed what they called the “Jewish Question” to which, by July 1941, Hitler’s answer was genocide.⁶³ Taken in sum, these sundry vectors of Fascist/Nazi policy cannot be understood except as directed toward taking their societies toward an alternative modernity.

The Relation of Italian Fascism to German Nazism

There is a long tradition of dissociating Italian Fascism from German Nazism that goes back to Hannah Arendt, who preferred to think of the Third Reich and Stalin’s Soviet state as more broadly comparable, indeed as unique members of the class of totalitarian states,⁶⁴ and Renzo de Felice who, in the course of four volumes devoted to the career of Benito Mussolini, argued that the Italian Fascist regime was *sui generis* and thus not comparable to Nazi Germany.⁶⁵ In de Felice’s view, “the differences between Italian and German varieties were greater than their similarities.”⁶⁶ Indeed, de Felice claimed that the Italian Fascist and German Nazi regimes nurtured different understandings of human nature. He was willing at most to concede that the two regimes might have had “a minimum common denominator” but added that this was “exceedingly minimal,” consisting of little more than their shared hostility to democracy and communism.⁶⁷ Asserting the same point from another direction, Kevin Passmore has suggested that the Nazis’ genocide of the Jews sets them apart from the Fascists, so that Nazism cannot be seen, in his view, as a form of generic fascism.⁶⁸ Zeev Sternhell too has dissociated Nazism not just from Italian Fascism but also from generic fascism, on the argument that “Nazism’s biological racialism makes it a case apart”⁶⁹—an argument seconded by Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Ippenmann.⁷⁰

Not everyone has accepted this argument, however. After all, if one considers the many varieties of forms of democracy or monarchy, why should one feel the need to assert that fascism can take only one form, that any government we might call fascist could not, by definition, have promoted genocide, or that the quest for an alternative modernity via the route of palingenesis was not, by itself, sufficient to associate these two regimes? The point to be made, as Roger Griffin has stressed, is that

the two regimes shared a myth of palingenesis, embraced an illiberal concept of the nation, and were committed to undo the purported “decadence” brought about by liberalism and restore a sense of meaning to society, in the process fostering a “sense of a beginning,” even provoking excitement at the prospect of a fresh start for humankind.⁷¹

And finally, what to do with the term *totalitarianism*? There have always been skeptics, such as A. James Gregor,⁷² who have felt that the term is simply too grand and that no regime has ever brought a truly totalitarian scheme to fruition. As F. W. Deakin put it in 1962, “Italian Fascism had never succeeded in being totalitarian.”⁷³ But, as Emilio Gentile has usefully pointed out, to apply the term totalitarian in reference to fascist regimes does not presume that they actually reached their goals.⁷⁴ Gentile has popularized the term *political religion*, applying it, specifically, to totalitarian systems. In his book, *Le religioni della politica*, he offered the following definition:

Political religion is a form of the sacralisation of politics of an exclusive and integralist character. It rejects coexistence with other political ideologies and movements, denies the autonomy of the individual with respect to the collective, prescribes the obligatory observance of its commandments and participation in its political cult, sanctifies violence as a legitimate arm of struggle against enemies and as an instrument of regeneration. It adopts a hostile attitude toward traditional institutionalised religions, seeking to eliminate them, or seeking to establish with them a relationship of symbiotic coexistence, in the sense that the political religion seeks to incorporate traditional religion within its own system of beliefs and myths, assigning it a subordinate and auxiliary role.⁷⁵

For Gentile, as well as for Griffin, Ernst Nolte,⁷⁶ and Stanley Payne⁷⁷—and, for that matter, the author of this book—fascism is a species of totalitarianism; this may be understood as a system seeking to remake and homogenize society, to generate a new kind of human being and a new civilization in which, as George Mosse has emphasized, there is no recognition of the autonomy of private life.⁷⁸ There is no other term that designates a system with these characteristics. The term *authori-*

tarianism is too weak, the term *dictatorship* is far too vague and general, and the term *tyranny*, which appears (among other places) in translations of Plato's *Republic*, refers to tyrants who inflict great harm on the subjects over whom they rule. The term *totalitarianism* refers to the ambition to remake and homogenize society, generating a new kind of human being or civilization, or abolishing the autonomy of private life.

Whether there are other disputes about fascism or not, the foregoing are those which have been the most energetically pursued. There is, as already agreed, a new consensus emerging,⁷⁹ casting *generic fascism* (thus including both the Italian Fascist and German Nazi regime) as revolutionary, radically illiberal, and as having sought to construct an alternative modernity via a *palingenetic* myth which promises to achieve a spiritual rebirth for people.

ITALIAN FASCISM

Perhaps the best place to start for an elucidation of Fascism is an article written by Mussolini himself, together with Giovanni Gentile, for the *Enciclopedia Italiana* in 1932; it is generally considered the most authoritative statement of what Fascism was thought to be. In this article, Mussolini and Gentile rejected the liberal conception in which, according to their understanding, "a man appears as an individual, standing by himself, self-centered, subject to natural law, which instinctively urges him toward a life of selfish momentary pleasure; it sees not only the individual but [also] the nation and the country; individuals and generations bound together by a moral law, with common traditions and a mission which suppressing the instinct for life closed in a brief circle of pleasure, builds up a higher life, founded on duty, a life free from the limitations of time and space."⁸⁰ Based on the liberty of the individual and on "the pursuit of happiness," to quote Jefferson, liberalism seemed decadent to Mussolini and Gentile, who argued that a person is truly human only as part "of the spiritual process to which he contributes as a member of the family, the social group, [and] the nation."⁸¹ What was needed, thus, was to build a new Italy. "From beneath the ruins of liberal, socialist, and democratic doctrines," the

article continues, "Fascism extracts those elements which are still vital ...; it rejects all else... . For Fascism, the State is absolute, individuals and groups relative."⁸² Lest anyone miss the point, they added, "Anti-individualistic, the Fascist conception of life stresses the importance of the State and accepts the individual only in so far as his interests coincide with those of the State."⁸³ This also means that there is no external standard by which the state may be judged since, outside the state, "no human or spiritual values can exist, much less have value." And, in this sense, the article concluded that Fascism is necessarily totalitarian, penetrating, interpreting, and shaping "the whole life of a people."⁸⁴ They dismissed the notion that any political doctrine could have transhistorical validity or utility but insisted toward the end of their article that "Never before have the peoples thirsted for authority, direction, order, as they do now. If each age has its doctrine, then innumerable symptoms indicate that the doctrine of our age is the Fascist [doctrine]."⁸⁵

THE FASCIST VISION

As already noted, the Fascists believed that Italian society had degenerated, becoming effeminate, bourgeois, decadent, and pleasure-centered. In order to achieve the spiritual rebirth of the nation, the Fascists needed to take over the state, expelling "parasitic elements,"⁸⁶ and steering the ship of state in a radically new direction, remaking society from the top down. The Fascist state would then figure "as a laboratory for the creation of a new civilization that would impose social, sexual, and racial order at a time of widespread uncertainty and change."⁸⁷ As the Fascist journal *Saggiatore* put it, all absolute values and all legacies from the past were now "obsolete."⁸⁸ Among the values touted by Italian Fascists were nobility of character, performance of one's duties, and courage in the face of danger. But these values were those promoted for public consumption and aimed at ordinary citizens. Other values of an overtly illiberal and antidemocratic nature were also operative, such as the exaggerated nationalism associated with Fascism, the denial of human equality, and the rejection of political pluralism and of majority rule. In fact, fascism arose in the early years of the twentieth century as part of

a Europe-wide reaction against the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and liberalism and, where it came to power in peacetime, only made headway in pluralist systems in which the working class became disillusioned with parties of the left.⁸⁹ Moreover, if one may define liberalism as a political ideology or political tradition involving the rule of law, individual rights and duties, tolerance, respect for the harm principle, equality, and the neutrality of the state in matters of religion, then we may note that fascism, historically, involved the repudiation of every one of these components of liberalism. Fascism was and is the doctrine of illiberalism par excellence.

Fascism would fashion a new unity, building a new community from which alienation, inter-group antagonisms, and conflict would be absent. In this “new civilization,” there would be no room for equality—whether between the sexes or between the races (see below for elaboration). With happiness foreign to the Fascist conception of the purposes of state, the system should celebrate, instead, heroism, which Mussolini defined as involving “acts in which no economic motive—remote or immediate—is at work.”⁹⁰ Although there was no Italian Fascist equivalent of the Nazi effort to “purify” the race, the regime was concerned about eugenics, wanting to see the nation strong and healthy and, as will be noted below, eventually passed a law against miscegenation. The most important Italian journal for the discussion of eugenics was *La Difesa della Razza*, in which both advocates of “negative” eugenics,—involving involuntary sterilization and mandatory premarital certificates of good racial quality—and defenders of “positive” eugenics—meaning an emphasis on promoting unions between those considered racially more desirable as well as births to such unions—were able to express their opinions.⁹¹ Ultimately, the advocates of positive eugenics prevailed, with Italian scientific opinion strongly rejecting recourse to involuntary sterilization.⁹²

Mussolini believed that his generation was a transitional generation. “We have entered fully into a period which can be called the transition from one type of civilization to another,” he wrote in 1933. “The ideologies of the nineteenth century are collapsing ... There are both negative and positive reasons for the decay and demise of demo-liberal civilization. The negative ones can be summed up as Capital’s evolution

into an impersonal form, which was thus in a certain sense already socialized and ready to fall into the arms of the State.”⁹³

The Fascist future, as envisioned by Mussolini and his collaborators, entailed autarky, or economic self-sufficiency,⁹⁴ a “myth ... of the greatness of the nation,” which the regime “want[ed] to translate into a total reality,”⁹⁵ a cult of the leader, and a cult of virility accompanied by a militarization of society. “We need soldiers rather than philosophers,” G. Gamberini wrote in 1928.⁹⁶ This militarization was intended both to discipline society, along the lines of the motto “Believe, obey, fight” and to support imperialist expansion. The quest to construct a new Roman Empire within different borders—rather than to reconstruct the empire within the borders it had had nearly two millennia earlier—involved a reimagining of ancient Rome, an appropriation of some ancient Roman symbols such as the Roman salute (*saluto romano*), and the conjuring of a palingenetic myth through which Italians would embrace, not the past, but the Fascist vision of an alternative future. In this way Italians would think that “they were living on the threshold of ‘a new civilization’ whose essence as yet no-one can know,” a “third time,” a “new epoch,” a “new cycle.”⁹⁷ “Rome is our point of departure and reference,” Mussolini said in a speech he delivered in 1922. “It is our symbol or, if you wish, our myth. We dream of a Roman Italy, that is wise and strong, disciplined and imperial.”⁹⁸ This was no idle imaginary; on the contrary, Mussolini’s regime made much of the bimillennary of Augustus Caesar in 1937–38. What should be emphasized is that the cult or myth of *romanità* was always a “*romanità* of modernity,”⁹⁹ employed for the purpose of setting twentieth-century Italy on a new trajectory to an alternative modernity already imagined and already being constructed. As the Fascists reconstructed the state, the individual disappeared from sight, exactly as Mussolini and Gentile had prescribed in their article on Fascism for the *Enciclopedia Italiana*. *La Dottrina Fascista* put it this way: “The individual, as a historical reality, has never existed... . The social personality of every group is always greater than the private personality. What follows is that ... the subject sees his individual power and personality enhanced as a direct function of the power, coherence, and stability of the group into which he is hierarchically inserted.”¹⁰⁰

INTELLECTUAL GODFATHERS OF FASCISM

Among the various writers who made their contribution to Fascist thought, I highlight four: Sergio Panunzio (1886–1944), Alfred Rocco (1875–1935), Giovanni Gentile (1875–1944), and Ugo Spirito (1896–1979).

Sergio Panunzio

Born in Molfetta in southern Italy, Panunzio was an active socialist by 1903 and contributed articles to the journal *Avanguardia socialista*, reading widely. Among those whose writings influenced Panunzio was Ludwig Gumplowicz, from whom he assimilated the idea that law originated in *force*. Such a view *might* have been reconciled with Marxist analysis, but Panunzio was, in fact, moving in another direction. Indeed, with time, Panunzio adopted a view of the law diametrically opposite to that of Marx, arguing “that law was intrinsic and necessary to society, essential to human liberty, requiring for its actuation the power of command—authority.”¹⁰¹ For Panunzio, relations of authority and subordination, like habits of obedience, were not only organic and traditional, but also functional for society. But Panunzio rejected the modern state as “unnatural” because it was founded on the illusion that one could speak sensibly of “the people.”¹⁰²

By 1912, Panunzio was influenced by Benedetto Croce (1866–1952), a neo-Hegelian thinker who at one time dismissed the British social Darwinist Herbert Spencer as a “luminous mediocrity,”¹⁰³ and his book, *Il diritto e l'autorità*, which was published that year, reflected Croce's influence. In this book, Panunzio urged that humankind is necessarily communal, and that community requires law. He added that law could arise from any association of people, not just from the state. Given this last point, he concluded “that law and authority *preceded* the political state, and would survive it ... Throughout time, Panunzio reminded his audience, law and authority were found manifest in clan, village, polis, communal and corporate entities.”¹⁰⁴

Panunzio's intellectual odyssey had begun with Marx, Gumplowicz, and Georges Sorel, and continued with explorations of the writings of Henri Bergson, Immanuel Kant, and especially Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. By the 1930s, he was integrating the diverse strands of his thought into a systematic fascist exposition. The result was the publication of *Teoria generale dello stato fascista* in two editions.¹⁰⁵ A. James Gregor has described this work as “perhaps the most comprehensive treatment of Fascism as a social and political doctrine we have available.”¹⁰⁶ Panunzio also became involved politically, joining the Partito Nazionale Fascista (PNF) and taking a seat in the parliament in 1924 as a Fascist deputy.

Alfredo Rocco

Born in Napoli, Rocco was trained as a jurist and would serve as minister of justice from 1925 to 1932. His views were distinctly reactionary and antiliberal. In 1914, he presented a lecture in Milan, attacking free-market economics. Five years later, he attended the Congress of Nationalists, presenting a program in which he stressed “the need for discipline, and the subordination of the individual to the state.”¹⁰⁷ He rejected the entire heritage of the French Revolution, including parliamentary democracy, liberalism, socialism, and—if it may be considered part of the heritage of the French Revolution—also anarchism. In 1925, he presented a talk in Perugia, under the title “The political doctrine of fascism.” In a key passage in this talk, he declared that “For liberalism, the individual is the end, and society the means ... For Fascism, society is the end, individuals the means, and its whole life consists in using individuals as instruments for its social ends.”¹⁰⁸ Identifying St. Thomas Aquinas and Niccolò Machiavelli as precursors of Fascism, Rocco touted corporatism, which he praised for assuring that “politics gained the upper hand over economics, authority over autonomy, and power over liberty.”¹⁰⁹ *Corporatism*, a theory to which Giuseppe Bottai (1895–1959), an Italian lawyer and journalist who served as minister of corporations from 1929 to 1932, made an important contribution,¹¹⁰ may be understood as “the organization of a society into industrial and professional corpora-

tions serving as organs of political representation and exercising control over persons and activities within their jurisdiction.”¹¹¹ For Rocco, corporatism would entail the dominance of the state, rather than the party, and already in 1920 he sketched his vision of corporatism, which included compulsory arbitration of labor disputes, the establishment of workers’ courts, and a ban on strikes and lockouts alike.¹¹²

Giovanni Gentile

Born in Castelvetro, Sicily, Gentile is perhaps the best known among Fascist intellectuals and certainly one of the most original. He has been described as “the official philosopher of Fascism . . . [and] an important philosopher”¹¹³ and was viewed, in his time, as someone whose “philosophy merits the attention of every serious thinker.”¹¹⁴ Teaching philosophy successively at the Universities of Palermo, Pisa, and Rome,¹¹⁵ before serving as Mussolini’s minister of education until 1924 and taking part in the debate on school reform, he developed a metaphysical system he called Actualism, arguing already in 1918 for a new revolutionary state in which citizens would identify so totally with the needs, policies, and actions of the state that individualism would lose its hold. In a manner consonant with Panunzio, Gentile argued that law was “necessarily and inextricably *moral*—and, by implication, inescapably universal.”¹¹⁶ For those subscribing to Actualism, the state was antecedent to individuals, and provided the political, social, and moral framework in which individuals defined themselves. Moreover, “the community—as the state—that served as the grounds of individuation for the individual was not a construction that was *inter homines*, between members of the community, but an *immanent* reality that arose out of members themselves.”¹¹⁷ Actualism held further that the world should *not* be viewed dualistically (separating the material world as an objective reality existing outside the mind). In the view of Actualism, what we think of as constituting reality can only be a product of shared perceptions, a product of collective consensus; hence, to speak of reality as objective is to make a fundamental error. It was in this sense that Gentile, who had been influenced by the philosophies of G. W. F. Hegel and

Johann Gottlieb Fichte, declared that only spirit (the collective mind of a people) was real.

For Gentile, further, it made no sense to speak of the state and individuals as if they were separate, because neither can exist without the other, and what is good for the state, it followed, is good for the individual. The state, for Gentile, was an ethical concept, much as it had been for Hegel, and this meant that the state's authority extended to both the temporal and spiritual spheres.¹¹⁸ Befitting his emphasis on the role of art¹¹⁹ and religion in education, Gentile argued that "culture could and should have a role of unifying man with the external world."¹²⁰ He was assassinated by communist partisans in his car in Florence on 15 April 1944.¹²¹

Ugo Spirito

Born in Arezzo, in southern Italy, in 1896, Spirito was attracted to the "idealism," which was gaining strength in Italy in the first decades of the twentieth century, and in particular to the ideas of Giovanni Gentile. Thus, he agreed—in line with Actualism—that what empirical science offered was not a picture of objective reality but rather a subjective consensus among specialists, collective subjectivity. By the end of the 1920s, Spirito applied Actualist presuppositions to mount a systematic attack on liberal economics (the Fascist alternative being the interventionist state). Spirito also devoted his attention to critiquing liberal notions of rights. Where John Stuart Mill could worry about an individual being victimized by the tyranny of the majority, Spirito urged that this concern was premised on a false dichotomy and that, just as there is no such thing as a "private language," all languages being the languages of nations, so too are culture and all cultural artifacts the products of communities. To the extent that an individual defines him- or herself in relation to culture and cultural artifacts, that individual is defining him- or herself in relation to and as an inseparable part of a community. It was as if Spirito wanted to stand Mill on his head, when he stressed the necessity "to create an environment in which individuals, and communities of individuals, would identify their most fundamental interests with those of the state."¹²²

Spirito adhered to the left wing of Fascism, and, at a conference in 1932, he proposed that private property be abolished.¹²³ This did not by any stretch of the imagination represent a consensus among Italian Fascists and, for that matter, Spirito became disillusioned with the Mussolini regime as early as 1929, when the Italian dictator signed the Lateran Accords with the Vatican which, in Spirito's view, "derailed" the school reform, by extending religious education into the secondary schools.¹²⁴ He subsequently broke with Fascism and converted to communism, only to be viewed by fellow communists as a "fascistic" communist. As punishment for his abandonment of Fascism, Spirito lost his professorship at the University of Pisa and was sent to the University of Messina—a dramatic demotion. He later abandoned communism, went on to teach at the Universities of Genoa and Rome, and died only in 1979.

These various strands came together to form a philosophy of Fascism, described by a disciple of Gentile, on the eve of Mussolini's accession to the office of prime minister, in the following words:

Fascism—that is, the practical negation of historical materialism and, still more, the negation of democratic individualism, of the rationalism of the Enlightenment—fascism is the affirmation of the principles of tradition, hierarchy, authority, and individual sacrifice in view of a historical ideal. It is the practical affirmation of the value of the spiritual and historical personality (of man, the nation, humanity) as opposed to and in opposition to reason and the abstract and empirical individuality of the men of the Enlightenment, the positivists, and the utilitarians.¹²⁵

Rejecting the Enlightenment and its progeny, liberal rationalism, Fascism rejected the idea that only the Enlightenment could serve as a foundation of a concept of modernity. At the same time, the Fascists did not embrace "tradition" or "hierarchy" in any way which would have been intelligible to their political forebears. Rather, as Emilio Gentile has written, "Fascist modernism sought to realize a new synthesis between tradition and modernity, without renouncing modernization, in order to realize the nation's goals of power."¹²⁶

MUSSOLINI'S RISE

Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) might seem to have been unlikely to emerge as a fascist leader anywhere. In his twenties, he was a socialist, calling for class struggle, criticizing the Catholic Church, and even opposing Italian imperialism. In 1911, for example, at age twenty-eight, he tried to provoke an uprising in order to stop Italy's war in Libya; as a result, he spent a year in prison. But during World War I, Mussolini abandoned socialism and embraced extreme nationalism; by the end of the war, Mussolini was talking of finding a "third way" between revolutionary socialism and liberal capitalism.

In March 1919, Mussolini tried to unite right-wing groups into a fascist movement: the *Fasci di Combattimento* (fighting bands).¹²⁷ The *Fasci* advocated female suffrage, proportional representation, confiscation of "excess" war profits, a minimum wage, an eight-hour day, workers' participation in industrial management, and the abnegation of imperialism. However its name linked this group not to Marxism, but to "combattentism," the spirit of the trenches, the spirit of the victory over the Austrians at Vittorio Veneto, the spirit of ultranationalism and patriotism. The new movement fielded candidates in the November 1919 elections, but not a single Fascist won election. Mussolini, running as the Fascist candidate in Milano, won only 5,000 out of 270,000 votes. Mussolini was deeply discouraged and thought about immigrating to the United States. At that time, there were only about 4,000 committed Fascists across all of Italy.

But in the years following World War I, several factors contributed to creating conditions for the rise of Fascism, including economic problems and labor unrest, disillusionment among nationalists that Italy had not been awarded more land at the end of the war, and Mussolini's strategic use of violence against the socialists. Also relevant was his ability to persuade Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti (1842–1928) and other liberal politicians that the Fascist movement did not represent a danger to liberal democracy and that Fascist calls for social revolution were just empty talk.

Beginning in 1918, the Fascist movement began to win some following in northern and central Italy. Fascist cells in provincial capitals

such as Bologna, Ferrara, and Firenze launched a policy of *squadrisimo*—violence by Fascist squads; the violence was directed against socialist and trade-unionist organizations, installations, and members. By the winter of 1920/21, Mussolini's movement numbered more than 21,000 members, organized into eighty-eight combat groups. As Salvatore Lupo has noted, Fascism "was not a party that created a militia, but rather a party-militia, together with combat groups."¹²⁸ Its use of violence, thus, was central to its drive for power. As the violence escalated, new members joined Fascist ranks, entering from diverse streams, including Futurists, revolutionary syndicalists, and Catholics. The squads expanded their activities to strike also at Catholic peasant leagues. Between autumn 1920 and summer 1922, the Fascist squads succeeded in destroying much of the infrastructure of Catholic and socialist rural trade unionism. Then, in the May 1921 elections, the Fascists won thirty-five seats in the parliament (with 7% of the vote). By this point, the Fascist Party claimed to have a membership of more than 200,000; many of these were shopkeepers and clerical workers.

As of March 1921, more than 18 percent of Italy's Fascists (14,756) were located in Trieste. The only other cities with 5,000 or more members in local *fasci* were Ferrara (7,000), Milano (6,000), and Bologna (5,130).¹²⁹ The Fascist movement was a polycephalous beast, but, among its various bosses, Mussolini was clearly the dominant figure. His glory had been briefly eclipsed by Gabriele D'Annunzio, a flamboyant poet who had seized control of the port city of Fiume (present-day Rijeka) in Dalmatia in September 1919, with some 4,000 armed legionnaires at his command. It was D'Annunzio who first popularized the technique of haranguing crowds from his balcony and who introduced the *saluto romano*.¹³⁰ But after fifteen months, D'Annunzio was out of power. Meanwhile, Mussolini's advantages were considerable: he was charming, a brilliant journalist, had theatrical skills, and knew how to exploit his good looks; he was also a good organizer and could inspire loyalty. Although he was the spokesman for the emergent movement, which already ran many local city councils, it was by no means clear that he was its leader; indeed, he was not able to control the squads or rein them in.¹³¹

By 1921, if not before, he was gravitating rightward and, by 1922, he had definitely shifted to the right.¹³² In the meantime—at the Fascist Congress held in Rome in November 1921—a decision was taken to bestow the title of “Il Duce del fascismo” (the Leader of Fascism) on Mussolini; until then he had routinely been referred to as “il Professore.”¹³³ As Mussolini’s popularity rose, the ranks of the Fascist movement swelled, numbering 322,210 members by May 1922—more than the total of socialists and communists combined.¹³⁴

On 28 October 1922, Mussolini’s Fascists/squadristi marched on Rome. Later, the Fascist regime would create a myth around the so-called March on Rome. But, as Martin Clark records, it involved little besides flag-waving and shouting, although it proved to be a brilliant exercise in self-deception.¹³⁵ Mussolini did not even take part in the march, but came to Rome by train the following day, after he was invited by the king to form a government. The march figured as a symbolic gesture, intended to lend drama to Mussolini’s elevation to the office of prime minister. That elevation, however, came about not because of the march but because Giolitti, who had served as prime minister before 1914 and again from 1920 to 1921, and also conservative politician Antonio Salandra, wanted to bring the Fascists into a coalition in the hope of taming them, while benefitting from their strength.¹³⁶ For that matter, the Holy See nurtured hopes that the Fascists could bring about a solution to the Church-state feud, which had begun with the suppression of the papal states in 1870.

The more than 30,000 Fascists who took part in the historic march were inadequately armed and could easily have been crushed if the government had had the will to do so. Instead, the marchers were able to take control of town halls, railway stations, and telephone exchanges across northern Italy, on their way to Rome. Then-prime minister Luigi Facta actually wanted to use the army to bring the march to a halt and, on 27 October 1922, met with King Emanuel and asked him to decree martial law. The king agreed. But the following morning, his royal majesty retracted his decision. Facta now stepped down as prime minister. As Italy looked to Mussolini to join the government, Mussolini let it be known that he would not join any government unless he was prime minister. Accordingly, on 29 October 1922, the King appointed Mus-

solini to the office he sought. Taking the oath of office, Mussolini swore to uphold the constitution. Yet on the same day, the incoming prime minister indicated that it would be necessary to “adapt the parliamentary procedure” to shift some powers from the legislature to the executive.¹³⁷

Between October 1922 and August 1925, Italy had a Fascist prime minister, but not yet a Fascist system. One of Mussolini’s first steps was to reassure the Vatican and to win the support of the Catholic Church. Among other things, he authorized religious education under the supervision of religious authorities,¹³⁸ banned contraception, and introduced penalties for cursing in public. On 22 June 1925, at the final session of the Fascist Congress, Mussolini threw down a gauntlet: “The Constitution,” he declared, “cannot be a hook on which to hang each generation... . Day after day, we are obliged to violate it.”¹³⁹ The Fascist regime subsequently made membership in the Fascist Party a requirement for government posts—in blatant violation of the nominally still valid constitution of 1848. Then, in July 1925, Mussolini imposed a series of laws establishing his control of the press. The following month, elected officials in the towns and cities were replaced by appointed Fascist officials and all meetings by opposition parties were prohibited. The regime also placed a high priority on reducing the high rate of illiteracy among Italians while, at the same time, using the schools to promote the standardization of spoken and written Italian.¹⁴⁰

On 3 January 1925, Mussolini granted himself enhanced powers, including the power to issue decrees, without parliamentary approval, and declared himself responsible only to the king.¹⁴¹ The government was reconstructed the following month. Subsequently, in October 1926, after the latest assassination attempt on his life, all parties other than the Fascist Party were suppressed altogether. Before the month was out, Mussolini assumed general command of the militia.¹⁴² In the meantime, the regime issued a circular, advising newspapers and magazines not to dwell on current news too much, and in particular to reduce the coverage of crime, suicides, abuse of children, floods and other natural disasters, and anything else which might “create unease and depress the public spirit ... [insofar as t]he exaggerated and alarmist narration of such events could give the false impression that the Italian people have not yet reached that level of maturity which looks reality in the face with a strong

and virile spirit.”¹⁴³ About this time, there was also a purge of the judiciary, to remove independent-minded judges, and, by December 1926, measures had been adopted which gave the “prejudicial” and extra-legal actions of the Fascist squads full legitimation under the law; in this way, lawlessness became law. By 1929, Italy had become a police state. The police enjoyed broad powers of surveillance and detention and the Mafia was compelled to coordinate its activities with the regime.¹⁴⁴ Special courts were set up, supposedly on a temporary basis, enjoying extraordinary powers. Among other things, there was no appeal from the decisions taken by these courts. Eventually, however, these courts became a permanent feature of the Fascist legal landscape and were incorporated into the 1931 Rocco criminal code.¹⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the regime organized a plebiscite on Fascism in March 1929; according to the official results, more than eight million votes were cast in favor of Fascism, with only 130,000 opposed.¹⁴⁶

RIVAL VISIONS

In the early years, there was intense competition between two wings of the PNF: the *intransigenti*, who believed that violence continued to be a useful political tool and wanted to keep the *squadristi* (armed Fascist squads) active; and the *revisionisti*, who were less violent and believed that the Fascist revolution was not yet complete. Roberto Farinacci (1892–1945) was the leading figure among the *intransigenti* and the leading exponent of *squadristismo*.¹⁴⁷ Farinacci wanted to have the party run the state, which would have entailed dismantling the monarchy; Mussolini was opposed to this, fearing that it would provoke civil war.¹⁴⁸ Together with other leading squadristi—Dino Grandi, Italo Balbo, and Piero Marsich—Farinacci, “wanted to take the leadership of fascism away from Mussolini ... to keep full freedom of action.”¹⁴⁹

Giuseppe Bottai (1895–1959) was one of the leading figures among the *revisionisti*. Founder of the periodical *Critica fascista*, he spoke of normalization and reconciliation, but thought that Fascism had moved away from its original ideals. He also was convinced that *squadristismo* had served its purpose and that the armed squads were no longer useful.

Massimo Rocca (1884–1973), another revisionist, argued that, with the conquest of power, the party had fulfilled its historical mission and should subordinate itself to the government and respect the institutions of the state.¹⁵⁰ Among some revisionisti, the prevailing sentiment was that there was not enough emphasis on ideological and educational work, and that these would be crucial to the project of transforming the nation's political culture.

In the first years after the march on Rome, Farinacci presented Mussolini with a challenge, demanding a second revolution to complete the "fascistization" of the state.¹⁵¹ Insofar as Mussolini favored the primacy of the government, Farinacci's championing of the reverse constituted a direct challenge both to Mussolini's authority and to *il Duce's* vision of Italy's future. The core of Farinacci's support consisted of tenant farmers and small shop owners. In spite of himself, Mussolini had to make concessions to this powerful collaborator and, with *il Duce's* approval, Farinacci was elected general secretary of the PNF by unanimous vote of the Fascist Grand Council on 12 February 1925. As general secretary, Farinacci not only enhanced the importance of his new post but also strengthened the party in relation to the government, while curbing factionalism within the party.¹⁵² Farinacci hoped to limit Mussolini's power, leaving him with little more than a symbolic role. But by March 1926, Farinacci's "reign" as general secretary came to an end.

There followed the revenge of the intransigenti, with the expulsion from the party of many *squadristi*, on orders from the new general secretary, Augusto Turati (1888–1955), who served in that position until October 1930, and his successor Giovanni Giurati (1876–1970), who held the office of general secretary from October 1930 until December 1931. It was also during these years that Mussolini was able to assert his predominance over the party and to effect the transformation of the party into an agency of the state. With this, the Mussolini regime had assumed the form it would maintain, more or less, until September 1943. Farinacism had been defeated.

REACHING AN ACCORD WITH THE HOLY SEE

In the 1920s, Catholicism shared Fascism's hostility to liberalism, democracy, and freemasonry; in these respects, there was a certain compatibility between the two. Alternatively, the *Dottrina del fascismo* stated explicitly, "Fascism is a religious conception, in which man is seen in his inherent relationship with a superior law, with an objective will, which transcends the particular individual and raises him up to be a conscious member of a spiritual society."¹⁵³ The relationship between Catholicism and Fascism, thus, was ambivalent. This ambivalence was expressed in 1926 in a proposal to ban all non-Fascist youth groups; this would have included the Catholic Action organization. Pope Pius XI (elected in February 1922) demanded that the Duce abort the planned ban. Mussolini was not prepared to retract the law or to write any exclusions into it, but he agreed not to apply the law against Catholic Action, although he insisted that the Catholic Boy Scouts be disbanded. In the meantime, bilateral negotiations about an accord between the Holy See and the Italian government were initiated on 6 August 1926, resulting in the preparation of a draft treaty by the end of the year. After further discussions, a revised text was ready by the end of May 1928.¹⁵⁴

After further talks, the regime signed two agreements with the Holy See, known as the Lateran Accords (named for the Lateran palace where they were signed on 11 February 1929). The first of these accords recognized the Vatican as an independent state and agreed to provide financial compensation to the pope for the loss of the papal states. The second (first proposed by Mussolini as early as January 1925) was a concordat, regulating the Church's position in Italy.¹⁵⁵ The details of the first agreement were easily settled, but the concordat proved to be stickier, especially as regards the Church's place in the schools. The final text of the concordat included, *inter alia*, the guarantee that the Holy See could communicate freely with bishops of the Church and the recognition of all Sundays plus ten listed religious holidays as days of rest.¹⁵⁶ In conjunction with this, the state also "reaffirmed its character as an essentially Catholic state."¹⁵⁷ But the regime continued to be bothered by the activities of Catholic Action, which the regime press accused

of being a political party. In fact, Catholic Action was a refuge for critics of the regime. By 1931, Fascist youth and university students were launching physical attacks on members of Catholic Action, which, by then, numbered 250,000 adherents.¹⁵⁸ These dual issues required some resolution.

Mussolini was aware that Catholic education represented a challenge to Fascist efforts to socialize the young and was wary of yielding on that point. But the pope held firm and, in his encyclical, *Non abbiamo bisogno*, issued on 5 July 1931, the pontiff wrote that “it is not reconcilable with Catholic doctrine to claim that the Church, the Pope, can limit itself to the external practices of religion (mass and sacraments) and [that] the rest of education belongs totally to the state.”¹⁵⁹ Mussolini gave way and finally agreed to have religious instruction included as a compulsory subject in all schools and let the Church organize it. Then, on 2 September 1931, the two sides signed an agreement, as a codicil to the Lateran Accords. In this codicil, the pope agreed that Catholic Action would not engage in any form of political activity and, in return, Mussolini allowed that members of the PNF could also be members of Catholic Action.¹⁶⁰ The terms of Church–state coexistence in Fascist Italy are of special interest in the context of a contrast with the Third Reich, since the Nazi regime wanted much more than mere coexistence, aspiring rather to instrumentalize Christianity as a tool of state policy. Mussolini’s regime did not seek to do this, but “police surveillance of Catholic clubs increased after the signing of the Lateran Treaties.”¹⁶¹

FASCISM, WOMEN, AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Where gender roles were concerned, the Fascists promoted what can, at best, be described as a caricature of the “ideal” woman and man. Having assimilated Oswald Spengler’s dictum that the size of a nation’s population is directly correlated with that nation’s power, Mussolini set his sights on boosting the population. The duty of parenthood was, of course, imposed on both women and men. At one point, Mussolini famously declared, “He who is not a father, is not a man.”¹⁶² The regime launched a “battle for births” (in 1927), establishing cash prizes for

women who were particularly prolific. The regime also imposed a bachelor tax on the 3 million unmarried men between ages twenty-five and sixty-five.¹⁶³ Meanwhile, the regime press brooded about the marked decline in the number of births, which it connected to a corresponding decline in the number of marriages,¹⁶⁴ and, in 1937, noting that population size had direct consequences for military potential, the Grand Council of Fascism deliberated about “radical measures” to stimulate births.¹⁶⁵

Inevitably, the more children a family raised, the harder it was for both parents to be employed. Women were therefore advised that they should be housewives and mothers, and leave salaried work to the men. In 1938, a decree even specified that only 10 percent of jobs could be held by women. Some thought was given to social reform, but the focus was on improving the living conditions of women in the countryside (so that they would not migrate to the cities) and on using upper-class women to offer advice to the peasants on how to improve home economics and home management. But for many peasant households, there were more basic questions; in the 1930s, for example, only 20 percent of Italian households had flush toilets.¹⁶⁶

Fascist policy in the sphere of gender relations worked in two contradictory directions, by promoting changes that would inevitably undermine conservative views about the ideal relations between men and women. Even on the question of whether to tolerate the non-Fascist feminist movements that had been active in Italy since soon after the war, the regime was ambivalent. The Fascist regime wanted to suppress feminism, but it tolerated the continued existence of various bourgeois associations, including the emancipation-oriented National Council of Italian Women (CNDI), which had been formed in 1903. This general policy of toleration continued until the late 1930s, and it was premised only on the condition that these associations not compete with the Fascist Party. Where an association was judged to have proven itself disloyal, it was banned—as happened to the Masons in 1925.¹⁶⁷ In this regard as well, the Fascist regime showed itself to be significantly and fundamentally different from the Nazi regime in Germany. But in late 1938, the CNDI, the Italian Federation for Women's Rights, the Rotary Club, and

additional male middle-class associations with international connections were shut down.

In the meantime, a Fascist women's movement grew slowly, achieving a real presence only a decade after Mussolini had become prime minister. Membership in the *fasci femminili* of the PNF grew steadily from 106,756 in 1930 to 398,923 in 1935.¹⁶⁸ The *fasci femminili* drew mostly middle-class women and, by September 1939, membership had grown to 750,000. In addition, some 1,480,000 rural housewives had joined the PNF's women's organization; about 500,000 working class women had joined the Section for Factory and Home Workers (SOLD); and some 450,000 young women had enrolled in the *giovani fascisti* (Young Fascists). This added up to 3,180,000 members, or about 25 percent of the over twenty female population.¹⁶⁹

There was also a Fascist organization for children and young people (the Opera Nazionale Balilla). This organization was given effective control of thousands of small rural schools, with heavy membership among children aged twelve or younger. In 1927, the Boy Scouts were banned, as were also the Catholic Scouts. In October 1930, the Young Fascists organization was established, recruiting members of between ages eighteen and twenty-one. The Young Fascists could be unruly and aggressive and, during 1931, made a series of physical attacks on members of Catholic youth organizations. The Young Fascists' mottoes, often written on public walls, were "Believe, Obey, Fight" and "Mussolini is always right." Socialization extended also to the schools, where a primary school textbook from 1927 advised its readers, "The Duce is semi-divine [ha del divino] ... His will is without limits, His courage annuls fear, His Heart is the synthesis of 40 million hearts ... He is Universal."¹⁷⁰

In addition, in 1932, Mussolini set up a governmental institution known as the Autonomous Body for the Permanent National Fashion Exhibition, tasked with overseeing the fashion industry. Renamed the National Fashion Body in 1934, this agency "aimed at organizing and promoting the Italian fashion industry and, in furtherance of this goal, made various attempts to regulate women's dress."¹⁷¹

In its effort to effect a high degree of social control, the Fascist regime also had recourse to Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro (or simply Dopolavoro), the Fascist leisure organization, which boasted "the largest

membership of any of the mass organizations.”¹⁷² The idea behind the creation of *Dopolavoro* was twofold: it was intended both to provide financial assistance to members of the working class who were unemployed or working for low wages and to socialize its members along Fascist lines, through its educational and recreational activities. In the early to mid-1920s, *Dopolavoro* was found principally in cities in the north, but gradually spread throughout Italy. By the 1930s, it was sponsoring festivals, theatrical groups, and musical events, while also organizing visits to important sites.¹⁷³ At least where young people were concerned, efforts at socialization came up against resistance. As noted in a report submitted to Achille Starace in November 1931, “unfortunately instead of diminishing, the detachment between Fascism and the youth sector seems to be growing.”¹⁷⁴

Social control was also effected by a secret police force known by the initials OVRA¹⁷⁵ but, by contrast with the way things were done in Nazi Germany or Stalin’s Russia, Mussolini kept the police under the control of the state apparatus, rather than under party control. Telephones were bugged and transcripts were prepared for il Duce of conversations involving people in whom he had some interest. And accompanying everything was a phenomenal cult of the personality. Among other things, Mussolini liked to take off his top and show off his physique, he liked to join peasants from time to time to thresh wheat in the fields, and he enjoyed the adoration of Italian women and was flooded with letters from admiring women. In the mid-1930s, his popularity was incredible, and in 1934 his name entered into a Cole Porter song: “You’re the top! You’re the Great Houdini! You’re the top! You’re Mussolini!”

Mussolini’s personality cult was carefully scripted and stage-managed, with activists on hand mingling in the crowd to stir up the enthusiasm of the crowds that showed up to hear Mussolini talk. Mussolini was, of course, a gifted orator and, while he valued—even needed—direct contact with people to bring out his charisma, his public appearances were also choreographed with an eye to the eventual newsreel footage on the silver screen.¹⁷⁶ But public rallies were only part of the way in which Mussolini maintained contact with the Italian people. There were also visits to factories, schools, Fascist organisations, and villages. Until Italy’s entry

into World War II, most of the enthusiasm that greeted Mussolini in these visits and rallies was genuine and served to reinforce his authority.

DIGGING UP THE PAST

Mussolini was well aware of the mystique of ancient Rome and of its hold on the imagination and national pride of many Italians of his day.¹⁷⁷ By associating himself symbolically with the ancient Romans, he could potentially lay claim to some of that mystique and channel it into a legitimization of his rule. The potential for archeological excavation was enormous and, at one point, Mussolini called for the excavation of ancient temples in the Largo di Torre Argentina in Rome so that they might be brought to public view, in the process upsetting some local businessmen who had planned to construct an office building on the site.¹⁷⁸ There were multiple signs of the cult of *Romanità*, from the use of the *fascies* to symbolize Fascist power to the Roman salute which Italians were expected to use to greet each other (in place of the handshake) to the emblazoning of the Roman eagle on the iconography of the regime to the celebration of Labour Day on 21 April, regarded as the anniversary of the founding of Rome. Even the wolf said to have suckled Romulus and Remus, the legendary founders of Rome, appeared in the regime's iconography.¹⁷⁹ The symbols, slogans, and festivals of ancient Rome were also reflected in Fascist-era Italy, and extended to the erection of new constructions in the spirit of ancient Rome, such as the monolith of Carrara marble erected at the entrance to the Foro Mussolini, as it was then called, on the tenth anniversary of the March on Rome.¹⁸⁰ The Fascist regime also linked commemorative events such as the second millennium of the birth of Virgil (1930), the second millennium of the birth of Horatius (1936), and the second millennium of the birth of Titus Livius (1941) with the theme of empire.

In its propaganda, the regime tried thus to tap into the grandeur of the past, and this grandeur was understood not merely in cultural terms but also in imperial terms. Thus, in the schools children prayed for the resurrection of the empire. Of course, what interested the Fascist regime was a selective recollection and selective interpretation of ancient Rome.

But this interest kindled the sponsorship of archeological excavations in search of the grandeur that was ancient Rome. That this interest was political rather than scholarly is evident from the fact that, when archeologists discovered buildings and artifacts from the Middle Ages, they either destroyed them or tossed them aside as rubbish, in order to dig deeper in the search for the Eternal City.¹⁸¹

Among these archeological excavations, the most spectacular were those at Herculaneum and at Lake Nemi in central Italy.¹⁸² It was Mussolini personally who ordered these excavations. Herculaneum, located near Pompeii, had like Pompeii been buried by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 CE, but, unlike Pompeii, a relatively unimportant provincial town in its day, Herculaneum was a rich resort town where Roman patricians came to relax. Even before these new excavations got underway, scholars pointed to bronze statues which had previously been unearthed at the site, which they said were “incomparably more valuable than anything found in Pompeii.”¹⁸³ Meanwhile, it was known that two enormous luxury barges, constructed at the order of Emperor Caligula between 37 CE and 41 CE, lay in Lake Nemi, not far below the surface. Work began at both sites in spring 1927, with plans to pump enough water out of Lake Nemi to lower it by some seventy-five feet (about twenty-five meters).¹⁸⁴ By March 1929, the first of the two Roman ships, *Diana's Mirror*, rose above the water, as crowds gazed in wonder.

There had been previous attempts to raise Caligula's barges—on the part of Leon Battisti Alberti in 1446; by Francesco de Marchi, an engineer from Milano, in 1535; by means of a diving bell in 1827; and by Eliseo Borghi, working with the official consent of the government in 1895.¹⁸⁵ But it was Mussolini, the new Augustus, who was finally succeeding where others had failed. The retrieval of the two luxury barges from Lake Nemi stirred intense excitement among archeologists at the time, as well as among both Italian and foreign tourists.¹⁸⁶ But in May 1943, as they were preparing to evacuate the area, retreating German forces set fire to the two vessels, as well as to the Museum of Nemi, where a number of historically valuable objects from Caligula's barges had been placed. Nothing was saved.¹⁸⁷

Rome was supposed to host the 1942 World's Fair and, in connection with that planned exposition, Mussolini ordered the excavation of Ostia,

an ancient city lying just outside Rome which was inhabited from the fourth century BCE to the sixth century CE. Some 600,000 cubic meters of earth were removed, revealing the remains of Olympian and Mithraic temples, shops, apartments, streets, and graves. The excavations continued until 1942, but the World's Fair was canceled.¹⁸⁸

By the time Mussolini was sworn into office, the Italian occupation of Libya, initiated in 1911, had been relaunched (specifically, in January 1922) but, although the coastal strip was secured by March 1928, the Italian hold on Tripolitania remained insecure even at the end of 1928. It was only after Mussolini appointed General Pietro Badoglio to serve as governor-general of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania at the end of 1928 that Italian fortunes in the war improved. By 1930, Tripolitania had been largely pacified and, by January 1932, Badoglio could announce that Cyrenaica had likewise been pacified.¹⁸⁹ The Fascist regime was eager to exploit archeological excavations to emphasize Libya's ancient association with Rome, and found ample remains from the distant past. Excavations focused on the ancient ports of Lepcis Magna and Sabratha. But, as in the case of excavations in Rome itself, archeological excavations were conducted in the spirit of *romanità* and regularly involved the destruction of artefacts and other remains from post-Roman eras.¹⁹⁰ Mussolini himself visited Libya on three occasions, making his first trip to Tripolitania in April 1926, when he visited Sabratha. He returned to Libya in March 1937, on which occasion he was acclaimed the Protector of Islam and presented with the Sword of Islam.¹⁹¹ Mussolini's third visit came in June–July 1942, when he hoped he might be on hand as victorious Axis troops entered Alexandria and Cairo. That hope, together with his hope of rekindling the glories of ancient Rome, would be dashed.

Needless to say, Mussolini's interest in archeological excavations had little, if anything, to do with scholarship and everything to do with the prestige of his regime and, as he put it in a speech on 21 April 1922, with reconnecting the city “with its own supreme destiny and thus lead[ing] the way to a profound national reawakening.”¹⁹² As Aristotle Kallis has explained, the Fascist revolution was thus “built on a discursive paradox: a force of rupture with the recent past that was nevertheless in thrall to its myths of national palingenesis and historical lineage from Roman antiquity.”¹⁹³

EXHIBITION OF THE FASCIST REVOLUTION

On 28 October 1932, the tenth anniversary of his elevation to leadership, Mussolini inaugurated the *Mostra della rivoluzione fascista* (the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution). The regime's news organ, *Il Popolo d'Italia*, described it as "not just an organized collection of historical documents but a living and powerful synthesis of the struggles, conquests, and glories which have characterized Fascism, as well as the state created and led by Benito Mussolini."¹⁹⁴ During its two-year run, the exhibition drew some 2,800,000 visitors for a massive celebration of ten years of Fascism. The exhibition took up twenty-three rooms and included some 18,400 photographs and other artifacts submitted by ordinary citizens and public organizations. It was intended to be more than a "simple exhibition" and aspired to be something which "will be deeply felt by the people in their souls, thirsting for light, love and drama."¹⁹⁵ But the exhibition was not aimed at recording history, but rather at offering the "definitive" version of the history of the Fascist state. Although the exhibit aimed overtly at mythologizing the recent past and at engaging people in the project of construction of a Fascist society, what was especially striking was the diversity of Italian artistic movements represented there; Futurism, Novecento, Rationalism, and neo-Impressionism were all represented, revealing the regime's cultural pluralism.¹⁹⁶

Nor was this cultural pluralism restricted to the exhibition. On the contrary, Fascist Italy, unlike Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia, was characterized by a "lack of ideological control" manifested in the fact that Italy's young people were allowed some freedom in their cultural activities, and were even encouraged to be creative and to think in cosmopolitan terms.¹⁹⁷ One exception was jazz, which was banned in 1930. But Fascist toleration of aesthetic pluralism had its limits. Blasting aesthetic "modernism ... as something bastard, international, external, mechanical—a racket manipulated by Jewish bankers, pederasts, war-profiteers, [and] brothel-keepers," Mino Maccari (1898–1989), a painter, engraver, and journalist, applauded "the heritage of our race, which has been conserved, passed down from century to century by that great friend and protector of peoples which is tradition, and against which [some] artists stupidly direct their wrath."¹⁹⁸

ECONOMICS

Fascist Italy has been given a mixed report card when it comes to economics. On the negative side of the ledger, a law introduced in 1922, which was to have broken up large estates in order to redistribute the land among small farmer and agricultural workers, was never even brought to a vote. In consequence, as of 1930, 0.5 percent of the population owned 42 percent of the land, with 87 percent of the rural population owning only 13 percent.¹⁹⁹ Moreover, the income of agricultural workers declined between 20 percent and 40 percent in the early 1930s, while industrial workers had to endure mandatory wage reductions in 1927, 1930, and 1934.²⁰⁰

On the other hand, there were some spectacular achievements, such as draining the swamplands, stabilizing the lira, electrifying 2,100 kilometers of railroads by the end of 1929 (and an additional 1,600 by the end of 1933), and the construction of thousands of kilometers of roads and some 400 bridges.²⁰¹ In Naples, the regime undertook to correct decades of neglect by liberal governments and, after six years of Fascist rule, the *New York Times* could report that “Streets that once were so badly paved that traffic was almost at a standstill are now entirely repaved.”²⁰² Moreover, Italy recorded a higher rate of growth in industrial production in 1913–39 than Britain, France, Germany, or the United States.²⁰³

There were also concrete benefits for Italian workers, such as the guarantee that one could return to one’s workplace after an illness and the right to a paid vacation.²⁰⁴ Moreover, the regime boasted that it had protected its workforce from the worst effects of the Great Depression that had begun in September 1929. Fascism’s economic model—offered as a third way distinct from both capitalism and communism—was the corporate state, which was supposed to draw both employers and employees into cooperative relations, thereby ending the class war. The kernel of Fascist corporatism, as practised in Italy, was to create a system so that the state could “know not only what [was] being produced, but also the conditions in which it [was] being produced.” In order to achieve this result, each Provincial Council of the Corporations was expected to maintain an inventory of production so that it would have “perfect knowledge of the productive process” in its province.²⁰⁵ Op-

erating under the supervision and control of the corporative state, these councils, in which both employers and workers would be involved, were supposed to participate in and contribute to the planning of the national economy. From 1926 to 1934, the regime promoted its model of corporatism, but, as Gianpasquale Santomassimo notes, after 1934, corporatism became a hollow shell, as the role of the corporations came to be set by the state.²⁰⁶ The effort to achieve autarky failed and preparations for war drained finances, which could otherwise have been invested more profitably in other sectors.

ABYSSINIA, RACISM, AND ANTI-SEMITISM

Mussolini reached the height of his popularity among Italians in 1936 when, at the cost of just under 4,600 dead, Italian troops conquered Abyssinia (Ethiopia), giving Italy an “empire,” even if not a country ever ruled by ancient Rome.²⁰⁷ The conquest of Abyssinia was accomplished only with the employment of the deadly compound C.500.T; in fact, during the seven months it took Italian forces to subdue Abyssinia, Italian aircraft dropped about 550 tons of lethal chemical weapons on the country, on both the Abyssinian armed forces and the civilian population.²⁰⁸ With some Italian soldiers feeling attracted to local Abyssinian women, the regime became worried lest these liaisons lead to marriages, and then to births. Accordingly, the regime passed a law in 1937, banning miscegenation. But Abyssinia proved to be an economic burden. In the brief period of occupation, Italian authorities had more than 3,000 kilometers of roads paved, and also had hospitals, schools, and aqueducts constructed, at the expense of Italian taxpayers. As of 1937–38, the regime was allocating about 12.5 percent of the state budget to expenses in East Africa.²⁰⁹ Before and after the conquest of Abyssinia, Italy maintained friendly relations with Great Britain;²¹⁰ indeed, Whitehall had even given its tacit approval (in advance) to the Italian venture.

From Ideological Anti-Semitism to Racial Anti-Semitism

There had been undercurrents of anti-Semitism in Italy long before Mussolini and his Fascists came to power and, in the Fascist era,²¹¹ there were, in fact, brief anti-Semitic campaigns in Italy in 1933–34. There were also contending currents of racism—a “Nordic” current, which advocated biological racism, and a “Mediterranean” current, which placed its emphasis on historical and geographic factors, rather than biology, and cast Italians as Mediterraneans, rather than as Nordics.²¹² But it was only in 1938 that Mussolini introduced official policies of anti-Semitism. This had little if anything to do with his alliance with Nazi Germany. It was rather the conquest of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) which marked a turning point in the Italian regime’s thinking about the Jews and the passage of the 1938 racial laws.²¹³ Concretely, Italian rule in Abyssinia could be justified only on the grounds of Italian superiority. Mussolini explained it in this way: “History teaches that while Empires are conquered by force of arms, they are nevertheless maintained by prestige. And to have prestige, it is necessary to develop a clear racial consciousness which establishes not only the sharpest differences between races, but also levels of superiority.”²¹⁴ When Italian Jews criticized the invasion and conquest of Abyssinia, they put themselves in the line of fire and ensured that the regime’s erstwhile ideological anti-Semitism would be transformed into racial anti-Semitism.²¹⁵ Some Jews occupying prominent posts in the military, in diplomacy, or even in journalism were now removed from their posts; the *Manifesto of Italian Racism*,²¹⁶ promulgated in the summer of 1938, marked Africans and Jews alike as outsiders to the Italian nation. Furthermore, no Jewish scholar was ever appointed to the prestigious Accademia d’Italia and, indeed, Jews were excluded after 1938 from membership in any academy or learned society in Italy. This policy began with a Royal Decree Law of 5 September 1938.²¹⁷ Although it was not until September 1938 that anti-Semitic legislation was adopted in Italy, expressions of anti-Semitism in the local press had become more frequent already beginning in the second half of 1936.²¹⁸ Moreover, the legislation, whatever its motivations (and they were surely diverse), affected Jews in all spheres of everyday life, including at the workplace, in the schools, and even in the family:

One of the most severe damaging effects of the laws was in the sphere of employment. Within a few months after September 1938, thousands of Jews in education, public service, banking, commerce, the military, and the professions were fired from their jobs. Between 1938 and 1942 Jews were banned from many professions and in others they suffered severe restrictions ... A harsh blow came in 1941 when even Jewish peddlers, who were on the lowest rungs of the economic ladder, lost their licenses.²¹⁹

Needless to say, the anti-Semitic legislation also affected the university, where professors deemed to be Jewish were sacked, and Italian Jews were denied entrance to university education. As Roberto Finzi notes, "the development of many young talents was curbed forever. In many university departments, most particularly in medical schools, the expulsion of the professor was soon followed by that of his collaborators, even those who were not Jews."²²⁰ High school teachers, elementary school teachers, and authors of schoolbooks were also sacked if they were Jewish. These and other measures impacted the Jewish community of Italy economically and morally, inflicting pain and distress on people whose only "crime" was to exist. Following the passage of the anti-Semitic legislation, Mussolini could not help connecting the newly adopted laws with ancient Rome. "The racial problem for me," he commented at the time, "is a very important challenge, and it is very important that we have introduced it in the history of Italy. The Romans of antiquity were incredible racists. The great struggle of the Roman Republic was this: to know if the Roman race was able to live alongside other races."²²¹

But not all Italian Fascist theorists agreed with the new racist formulation. As Gene Bernadini has explained,

To neo-Hegelians like Giovanni Gentile and Ugo Spirito, who believed [that] the substance of a nation resided in pure will, in the union of spirits struggling for a common ideal, every form of assimilation was possible: Jews and Latins, blacks and whites, all could be fused through an affirmation of faith and will. To philosophical materialists like Giulio Cogni, on the other hand, ideas could not be so far removed from material reality; like the Nazis, Cogni argued that nation

or race is fundamentally rooted in biological matter and derived from the blood.²²²

But racial anti-Semitism did not arise merely as a logical corollary of Fascist imperialism. It also reflected the active agitation on the part of vehement anti-Semites such as Roberto Farinacci, the publisher of the newspaper *Il regime fascista*, and Alberto Luchini, head of the Race Office of the Ministry of Popular Culture. Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that most Italians recoiled from the anti-Semitism expressed in the legislation adopted in 1938.²²³

From Neutrality to Alliance with Hitler

In those days, too, Mussolini was firmer than either the British or the French in standing up to Hitler and when, in July 1934, Austrian Nazis assassinated Prime Minister Engelbert Dollfuss, Mussolini rushed troops to the border with Austria in a clear warning to the German Führer. But Mussolini finally cast his lot with Hitler in October 1936, by signing the Axis Pact. Mussolini and Hitler collaborated in funneling military assistance to Franco's forces during the Spanish Civil War (although they seem to have decided on intervention independently of each other²²⁴), and, in March 1938, Mussolini turned a blind eye to Hitler's annexation of Austria. Subsequently, in September 1938, Mussolini served as mediator for the Munich agreement (under which Czechoslovakia was forced to cede the Sudetenland to Germany), and came to be viewed briefly, both at home and abroad, as a kind of saviour. But in mid-March 1939, Hitler sent in troops to annex what was left of Bohemia and Moravia, setting up Slovakia as a puppet state. With this, Mussolini's reputation as a great peacemaker was smashed. In any event, Mussolini sent his troops into Albania the following month, occupying the country within two days.²²⁵ The intervention contravened the 1927 Italo-Albanian treaty, in which Italy had guaranteed the independence and territorial integrity of Albania.²²⁶ But the Italians, who claimed that they were welcomed "enthusiastically" by the Albanians, claimed to want

only to assure “order, justice, tranquility of work, and the well-being of a population which Italy considers friendly.”²²⁷

By this point, Hitler was preparing for war, while Mussolini, believing that he would do best to enter the war on Germany’s side (rather than staying out of the war, as, for example, Franco did), sent a memorandum to Hitler on 30 May 1939. In this memorandum, Mussolini asked that war be delayed for at least three years, so that Italy could build more warships, improve its artillery stock, and free itself of dependence on foreign imports.²²⁸ When Hitler went to war four months later, Mussolini, being aware of his country’s economic limitations, hesitated to bring Italy into the war.²²⁹ But by the spring of 1940, it appeared that the Germans were advancing on all fronts. Mussolini now brought Italy into the war, with disastrous results. Allowing himself to feel confident that Hitler’s plan to invade the Soviet Union—Operation Barbarossa—would succeed, Mussolini believed that it was “of capital importance” that Italy make a commitment to that invasion.²³⁰ Accordingly, Mussolini sent an initial force (organized under the rubric, the *Corp di spediazione italiano in Russia*) of 58,000 troops along with 5,500 motor vehicles, fifty-one fighter aircraft, twenty-two reconnaissance aircraft, and ten transport aircraft to accompany the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941.²³¹ Eventually, the number of Italian troops fighting on the eastern front reached 230,000. Of this number, only about 10,000 made it back to Italy after the war. The Allies overran Tripoli on 23 January 1943, signifying Italy’s loss of Libya. By then, the popularity of Mussolini’s regime was shriveling as a result of several factors, including the war itself, food rationing, inflation, and the dispatch of about 200,000 Italians to Germany to work under appalling conditions in the German arms industry.²³²

As the war went from bad to worse, disgruntled Fascists persuaded the Duce to call the Fascist Grand Council into session. In what was its first meeting since 1939, the council, in the course of the night of 24/25 July 1943, called on the king to resume command of the armed forces (in other words, to strip Mussolini of his authority). On 25 July, the king dismissed Mussolini from office; immediately after his meeting with the king, Mussolini was taken into custody. No sooner had Mussolini been arrested, than Hitler decided to free him.

THE SALÒ REPUBLIC

On 12 September 1943, German paratroopers rescued Mussolini from confinement in the Hotel Imperatore near the summit of Gran Sasso (elevation 6,500 feet). He was packed into a biplane and flown first to Pratica del Mare and then (in a larger plane) to Vienna. The following day, the fallen Duce was flown to Munich for a meeting with Hitler. Mussolini was in ill health by then and had no interest in taking on another political role. But Hitler needed Mussolini, albeit only as a figurehead for a rump Italian state. Mussolini demurred but the German Führer threatened to treat Italy the way he had treated Poland, unless Mussolini cooperated. So Mussolini agreed, albeit reluctantly. Mussolini wanted to establish his revived regime in Rome or, alternatively, in Milan. But Hitler vetoed both ideas and, instead of taking up residence in one of these cities, Mussolini set up his office in the Villa delle Orsoline, about half a mile from Salò. Hitler wanted to see the reborn state called the Italian Fascist Republic, but Mussolini insisted that it be called the Italian Social Republic (*Repubblica Sociale Italiana*), signalling by that choice of name a return to the original ideals of Italian Fascism, before it came under the influence of German Nazism.²³³ On 23 September 1943, Mussolini flew back to Italy, taking up residence in Gargano, on the west bank of Lake Garda. Although only the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Popular Culture were located at Salò, a neighboring town also on Lake Garda, the puppet regime soon became known popularly as the Salò Republic, because the government communiqués issued by the Ministry of Popular Culture (in effect, the Ministry of Propaganda) all featured a Salò dateline. In real terms, the most important figure as such in the Salò regime was not Mussolini but Alessandro Pavolini, described by Göran Hägg as a “bloodthirsty fanatic.” Mussolini himself was surrounded by SS guards at all times.²³⁴

In his first public radio address since being rescued (on 18 September 1943, while still in Munich), Mussolini summarized the four main points in his program:

1. Take up arms alongside Germany and Japan.
2. Prepare the reorganization of armed forces around militia units without delay.

3. Eliminate traitors, particularly those who [had] voted against him in the Grand Council on 25 July and “passed into the ranks of the enemy.”
4. Annihilate the “parasitical plutocracies.”²³⁵

The reference to “parasitical plutocracies” revealed that Mussolini was seeking to redeem himself. Two months later, Mussolini convened a congress at Verona, where the delegates issued a manifesto declaring their opposition to plutocracy and guaranteeing private property provided that it was not associated with harm to “the physical and moral personality of other men through the exploitation of their work.”²³⁶ The Verona Manifesto also abandoned corporatism, once held up as a distinctive hallmark of Fascism, emphasizing instead the nationalization of public services and workers’ control of industry. It seemed that Mussolini hoped to redefine Italian Fascism as a left-wing ideology.²³⁷ If so, the industrial workers of northern Italy were unimpressed, and they abandoned Fascism for socialist and communist parties. Even so, Mussolini still enjoyed some support in his last 600 days. About 300,000 young men presented themselves for conscription after September 1943 and just in Milan 50,000 persons joined the reconstructed Fascist Party.²³⁸

In fact, Mussolini was not among those in attendance at the Verona Congress but, on 13 November 1943, in an unsigned article, he cheered Fascism’s return “to its revolutionary origins in all sectors, and particularly in the social one.”²³⁹ While at Salò, Mussolini returned to Plato’s *Republic*,²⁴⁰ rereading various chapters.²⁴¹ In 1944, Mussolini was in Milan and it was there that he presented his last public speech on 16 December 1944:

Comrades! Dear Comrades of Milan! ... From the social standpoint, the program of Republican Fascism is but the logical continuation of the program of 1919—of the achievements of the program of 1919—of the achievements of the splendid years that took place between the announcement of the Labour Charter and the conquest of the empire...

It was necessary to build a foundation of syndical legislation and corporative bodies before we could take the subsequent step towards socialisation.²⁴²

On 18 April 1945, Mussolini decided to abandon Gargano altogether and move his government to Milan. During the following week, he made an effort to contact the Allies to negotiate his surrender to them, rather than to the partisans.²⁴³ Failing in this endeavor, however, he joined a large group of Luftwaffe personnel fleeing northward on the morning of 27 April, but was recognized by Italian partisans, apprehended, and, on 28 April 1945, shot. With that, the era of Italian Fascism came to an end.

SUMMING UP THE ITALIAN FASCIST EXPERIENCE

The Fascists aspired to build a hierarchical, unified state, in which all Italians would be bound together by a unity of purpose. It is, then, of some interest that Fascist activists were unable to agree on such basic issues as the role of women, the place of trade unions, the contribution to be made by national literature, and party-state relations. The last of these disputes struck at the very heart of the Fascist regime. Yet Fascists who had come over from the Italian Nationalist Association wanted a strong state and were against party supervision of the administrative apparatus and civil service, while Farinacci, general secretary of the Fascist Party, and his successors in that capacity, Augusto Turati and Achille Starace, worked in the opposite direction, seeking to strengthen the party.²⁴⁴ There were also continued disagreements, according to Paul Wilkinson, not only about tactics but also about the very purposes and goals of the regime, “between the fascist movement’s grass-roots militia and members of Mussolini’s para-military militia [on the one side], and the more conservative traditionalist forces in Italy which Mussolini was not powerful enough to destroy or control and upon whose tacit support the Mussolini regime depended for its survival.”²⁴⁵ With these internecine struggles going on, Mussolini tried, as much as possible, to assert his will in all matters in dispute. This was why, at one point, he was the nominal chief of eight ministries.²⁴⁶

If unity eluded Fascist ranks, it is no surprise that there was also resistance to the new social order at the universities. Indeed, some university professors continued to think for themselves and to subscribe

to liberal—which is to say, antifascist—views. In response, the regime decided in 1931 to require that every professor take an oath swearing loyalty to the king and to the Fascist regime.²⁴⁷ Some distinguished professors, such as Lioncello Venturi, Gaetano De Sanctis, and Francesco Ruffini, refused to take the oath and were dismissed. But the regime was not able to bridle the world-renowned philosopher Benedetto Croce who, in the spring of 1925, had described Fascism as “an incoherent and bizarre mixture of appeals to authority and demagoguery, ... unbelief and toadying to the Catholic Church, flight from culture and sterile reachings towards a culture without a basis, mystical languours and cynicism.”²⁴⁸ Four years later, among Italian senators, Croce’s was the lone voice protesting against the Lateran Accords.

In what sense, then, was the Fascist regime totalitarian? It was totalitarian in not recognizing the autonomy of the private sphere, in subscribing to a palingenetic myth and adopting programs directed toward remaking and homogenizing society, and in working to generate a new human type, thinking in the Fascist way. Spanish dictator Francisco Franco (1892–1975) and Portuguese strongman António de Oliveira Salazar (1889–1970), by contrast, did not seek to remake society, did not aspire to generate a new human type, and had no interest in palingenesis. The most decisive difference between the two Iberian dictators and Mussolini in their respective fates was that former were content to rule unchallenged in their respective countries and had no interest in expanding their domains, while the latter dreamed of creating a new Roman Empire and therefore involved his unprepared country in World War II. Although there were other cracks in the Fascist edifice, it was the Mussolini regime’s commitment to build an overseas empire that strained the country’s economy, overextended its military, alienated the Italian public, and drew Italy into a disastrous war against the United States and Great Britain.

Notes

- 1 Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1941).
- 2 As quoted in Luciano Pellicani, "Fascism, Capitalism, Modernity," *European Journal of Political Theory*, vol. 11, no. 4 (October 2012), 396 (emphases removed).
- 3 Ibid., 403, quoting from Giovanni Gentile.
- 4 Franz L. Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism* (London: Gollancz, 1942).
- 5 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 3rd ed. (London and New York: George Allen & Unwin, 1966).
- 6 Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 181.
- 7 David D. Roberts, "Fascism, Marxism, and the Question of Modern Revolution," in *European Journal of Political Theory*, vol. 9, no. 2 (April 2010), 184.
- 8 Daniel Woodley, "Between Myth and Modernity: Fascism as Anti-Praxis," *European Journal of Political Theory*, vol. 11, no. 4 (October 2012), 369.
- 9 Ibid., 366.
- 10 Renton, as summarized and quoted in Roger Griffin, "Football in No-Man's-Land? The Prospects for a Fruitful 'Inter-Camp' Dialogue within Fascist Studies," *European Journal of Political Theory*, vol. 11, no. 4 (October 2012), 482.
- 11 Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and the Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 1995), 164, as paraphrased in Roberts, "Fascism, Marxism, and the Question," 186.
- 12 Nicos Poulantzas, "An Exceptional Form of the Capitalist State," in *International Fascism: Theories, causes and the New Consensus*, ed. Roger Griffin (London and New York: Arnold, a member of the Hadder-Headline Group, and Oxford University Press, 1998), 86–88. Subsequent references to this source will use the acronym RGIF.
- 13 Roger Griffin, "Fascism" (1993), in RGIF, 35–36; Emilio Gentile, "Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Definitions and Critical Reflections on Criticism of an Interpretation," in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, vol. 5, no. 3 (Winter 2004), 329; George L. Mosse, "A Politico-Cultural Revolution," in RGIF, 137 and 141; and Wolfgang Sauer, "A Revolt against Modern Civilization," in RGIF, 114.
- 14 Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 181–82.
- 15 Gentile, "Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion," 328.
- 16 Ibid., 329.
- 17 Benito Mussolini, "The Ideology of the Twentieth Century," in RGIF, 255–56.

- 18 As quoted in Pellicani, "Fascism, Capitalism, Modernity," 396.
- 19 Guglielmo Ferrero, *The Principles of Power: The Great Political Crisis of History*, trans. from Italian by Theodore R. Jaeckel (New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1942).
- 20 Sabrina Ramet, *Whose Democracy? Nationalism, Religion, and the Doctrine of Collective Rights in Post-1989 Eastern Europe* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 166.
- 21 Ibid., 169.
- 22 Mussolini, "The Ideology of the Twentieth Century," 254.
- 23 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, as quoted in Pellicani, "Fascism, Capitalism, Modernity," 397–98 (emphasis removed).
- 24 Pellicani, "Fascism, Capitalism, Modernity," 400.
- 25 As quoted in ibid., 395.
- 26 Danile Breschi, "Fascism, Liberalism and Revolution," *European Journal of Political Theory*, vol. 11, no. 4 (October 2012), 410 (abstract); see also 411.
- 27 Ishay Landa, *The Apprentice's Sorcerer: Liberal Tradition and Fascism* (Boston: Brill, 2010), as summarized in Salvatore Garau, "If Liberalism Steps into the Fascist Synthesis: The Diverging Views of Zeev Sternhell and Ishay Landa on the Origins of Fascist Ideology," *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 19, no. 1 (2014), 64.
- 28 Griffin, "Fascism," 36.
- 29 Aristotle A. Kallis, "The 'Regime-Model' of Fascism: A Typology," in *Comparative Fascist Studies: New Perspectives*, ed. Constantin Iordachi (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 222. See also the discussion in Martin Blinkhorn, "Fascists and Conservatives: Between Alliance and Rivalry," in *The Fascism Reader*, Aristotle A. Kallis (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2003), 435–41.
- 30 Zeev Sternhell, "Fascism" (1987), in RGIF, 33–34. See also Zeev Sternhell, with Mario Sznajder and Maia Asheri, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*, trans. from French by David Maisel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); and Zeev Sternhell, "Fascism: Reflections on the Fate of Ideas in Twentieth Century History," *Journal of Political Ideas*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2000), 139–62.
- 31 Garau, "If Liberalism Steps into the Fascist Synthesis," 62.
- 32 Richard Saage, "Fascism—Revolutionary Departure to an Alternative Modernity? A response to Roger Griffin's 'Exploding the Continuum of History,'" *European Journal of Political Theory*, vol. 11, no. 4 (October 2012), 427.
- 33 Stanley G. Payne, "A Form of Revolutionary Ultra-Nationalism" (1996), in RGIF, 151.
- 34 Roger Eatwell, "The Drive towards Synthesis" (1992), in RGIF, 196.

- 35 Griffin, "Football in No-Man's-Land?," 479. See also Joseph L. Yannielli, "The Nationalist International: Or What American History Can Teach Us about the Fascist Revolution," *European Journal of Political Theory*, vol. 11, no. 4 (October 2012), 449.
- 36 As I have defined *liberalism* in my book, *The Liberal Project and the Transformation of Democracy: The Case of East Central Europe* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 10, 72.
- 37 See David Brink, "Mill's Moral and Political Philosophy," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (first published 9 October 2007; substantially revised 22 August 2014), <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mill-moral-political/#HarPri>.
- 38 Domenico Settembrini, *Storia dell'idea anti-borghese in Italia* (Bari: Laterza, 1988), 340, as quoted in Pellicani, "Fascism, Capitalism, Modernity," 403.
- 39 See Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism*, trans. from German by Leila Vennewitz (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966).
- 40 Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., "Fascism and Modernization," *World Politics*, vol. 24, no. 4 (July 1972), 547-64.
- 41 Sandro Bellassai, "The Masculine Mystique: Antimodernism and Virility in Fascist Italy," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3 (2005), 314-35.
- 42 Turner, "Fascism and Modernization," 550.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 553n13.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 553.
- 45 Bellassai, "The Masculine Mystique," 314.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 330.
- 47 See, for example, Tad Tuleja, ed., *Usable Pasts: Traditions and Group Expressions in North America* (Logan and Boulder: Utah State University Press and University Press of Colorado, 1997).
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- 245 Paul Wilkinson, “Fascism” (1987), in RGIF, 28.
- 246 Passmore, *Fascism*, 53.
- 247 Wiskemann, *Fascism in Italy*, 43.
- 248 As quoted in *ibid.*, 44.

CHAPTER 4

The Quest for an Alternative Modernity: Fascism and Nazism Part II

The previous chapter reviewed five debates about generic fascism. (1) Were the fascist regimes revolutionary or reactionary? I argued that they were revolutionary in intention and execution. (2) Were the fascist regimes the offspring of liberalism, with capitalist elites setting up the fascist apparatus to protect their interests, or is fascism better viewed as having involved a complete repudiation of liberalism? I argued that fascism is best understood as involving a complete repudiation of liberalism, indeed as antiliberalism par excellence. (3) Was fascism a modernizing or an antimodern phenomenon? In harmony with scholars to whom I have given credit in the previous chapter, I argued that fascist regimes were striving for an alternative modernity and should thus be seen as having been modernizing. (4) What is the relation of Italian Fascism to German Nazism, in particular were these members of a common genus or largely different political phenomena which were only superficially similar? I argued, again in agreement with scholars named in the previous chapter, that Italian Fascism and German Nazism, though different in some particulars, were both characterized by a palingenetic vision, a regimentation of society, a denial of the autonomy of the private sphere, and other features which identify them as members of a common political genus. (5) Is there any use for the term “totalitarianism” or should the word be purged from our scientific vocabulary? I argued that the term is useful in setting certain regimes and, in this case, the fascist regimes apart from mere “authoritarian” regimes, which lack an aspiration to an alternative modernity, may recognize the autonomy of the private sphere, and lack other features that have been associated with the term “totalitarianism.” This chapter picks up the discussion where the previous chapter left off, focusing on the Third

Reich and closing with a summary of some differences between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

NAZISM—THE THIRD REICH

More than seventy years after the end of World War II, the twelve years that the Third Reich existed are remembered as one of the most terrifying and tragic periods in history. This is, in the first place, because of the Holocaust, in which an estimated 6 millions Jews were liquidated, but also because of the systematic discrimination against, persecution of, and liquidation of members of other groups, enumerated in the previous chapter, whom the Nazis considered “life unworthy of life.” But there were other features of Nazi Germany that continue to shock us, including the conduct of medical experiments on Jews, the issuance of certificates of racial fitness, the involuntary sterilization of between 320,000 and 400,000 persons between 1933 and 1945,¹ the doctoring of opera libretti and regulation of the cultural sector, and the systematic regimentation of life, extending down to which dances should be promoted and which should be banned.

One continuing controversy about the Third Reich, already discussed in the previous chapter, centers on the interpretive question, was the Third Reich simply a more extreme version of fascism, differing from Italian Fascism in degree but not in kind? Or was Nazism a distinct phenomenon, sharing some features with Italian Fascism, but sufficiently distinct to be considered a separate type? Those who seek to make the case for the uniqueness of the Third Reich typically point to the Holocaust. Those who believe, on the contrary, that Nazism and Fascism were members of a common genus can note that there is no reason to expect all fascist regimes to be identical any more than one might expect all democratic systems, for example, to be identical. As extreme and as tragic as the Holocaust was, the elements that characterize fascist regimes are those that have been enumerated in the previous chapter, and these elements were found in both Fascist Italy and the Third Reich. One way of squaring the circle—which I favor—is to recognize the Third Reich as a unique member of the fascist genus, unique above all because of the

Holocaust. However, one could add that Fascist Italy was also a unique member of the fascist genus, insofar as it was the only fascist regime to draw on an ancient empire for symbology, for a historical point of reference, in order to conjure up the enchantment needed to push Italians toward an alternative future.

Before entering into a discussion of the Nazi vision and the policies and experiences of the Third Reich, this definition of Nazism may provide a place to start.

Nazism may be viewed as a racialist system characterized by extreme xenophobia, a determination to carry out an extreme eugenics program by means of euthanasia and mass murder, driven by a palingenetic myth, and characterized by megalomania and organizational confusion. Sharing Fascism's hostility to the Enlightenment and its products, it sought to realize a vision of an alternative future in which the "master race" of Germans and Nordics would rule a large Eurasian empire, in the process remolding human nature and human society in accord with fascist values. Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) conceived of the system as a kind of "plebiscitary democracy" in which the people choose their leader to serve for life. The Nazi system was also a mass mobilization system in which people's energies were mobilized by the regime and orchestrated in regime-dictated programs. For the Nazis, the originally pure character of Teutonic-Nordic culture had been defiled and, especially during the years of the Weimar Republic (1919–33), by the combined influence of liberal humanism, undermined by communists and destroyed from within by international Jewry. In Hitler's mind, Marxism was "a 'poison' deliberately produced by the Jewish 'prophet' Karl Marx 'in the service of his race' to bring about the 'swifter annihilation of the independent existence of free nations on this earth.'"² Consistently, he viewed the Bolshevik party as a weapon wielded by the Jews in their quest for world dominion.³ "The hour of decision has come," Dieter Eckart had announced, "between existence and non-existence, between Germantum and Jewry, ... all or nothing."⁴ In this life-and-death struggle, as Hitler saw it, the purpose of the state in the first place was "the preservation and advancement of a community of physically and psychologically homogeneous creatures."⁵ But with liberal/capitalist democracies fomenting the atomization of individuals and promoting alienation, the

task then was to build “a new Reich, a new nation and a new civilization—a new literature, a new art and a new system of jurisprudence,”⁶ and beyond this a new era and a new type of humankind.

NAZI VALUES AND THE NAZI VISION

The starting point for any discussion of the Nazi vision must be what Hitler’s goals were—even though, as will be noted in later sections of this chapter, there were some disputes among Nazis not only about specific policies, but even about the vision itself. And when it comes to Hitler, his book, *Mein Kampf*, written during the eight months he spent incarcerated in Landsberg prison for his attempt to seize power in the abortive “beer hall putsch” in November 1923,⁷ already outlines the basic elements in his worldview and vision of the future. For present purposes, these may be reduced to three central points. First and most obviously, *Mein Kampf* is an intensely anti-Semitic book. The Jew, Hitler charged,

lacks completely the most essential requirement for a cultured people, the idealistic attitudeTo what an extent the Jew takes over foreign culture, imitating or rather ruining it, can be seen from the fact that he is mostly found in the art which seems to require [the] least original invention, the art of acting. But even here, in reality, he is only a “juggler,” or rather an ape ...

No, the Jew possesses no culture-creating force of any sort, since the idealism, without which there is no true higher development of man, is not present in him and never was present.⁸

For Hitler, Jews were parasites and liars, who used democratic institutions to their own advantage.⁹

That brings us to the second *idée fixe* in Hitler’s *Weltanschauung*, namely, his contempt for parliamentary democracy (a contempt characteristic of generic fascism generally). Although he grudgingly admitted “a certain admiration for the British parliament,” he declared himself, in the same breath, as “an enemy of the Austrian parliament.”¹⁰ But it was not the particulars of parliamentary rule in Habsburg Austria which

bothered Hitler, but rather the principle of majority rule, which he equated with the rule of *stupidity*.¹¹ For him, majority rule meant the triumph of a mob, and mobs of citizens, in his view, never understand any important idea until it succeeds.¹² Ordinary people, he wrote, tend to be ill-informed, lack any “definite political views of their own,” and allow themselves to be manipulated by ambitious political demagogues and journalists, whom he stigmatized as “scum.” In his mind, “these scum manufacture more than three quarters of the so-called ‘public opinion,’ from whose foam the parliamentary Aphrodite arises.”¹³ Associated with the lazy thinking and mediocrity of ordinary people is their instinctive “revulsion ... for every outstanding genius.”¹⁴ But, in Hitler’s mind, it was only a true genius who could chart a course for national prosperity and, in the case of Germany, national rebirth. Democracy, he argued, was a system in which the lowest common denominator prevailed, resulting, *de facto*, in rule by idiots.

The third Leitmotif in Hitler’s thinking was the imperative of territorial expansion. As he put it in *Mein Kampf*, “Only an adequately large space on this earth assures a nation of freedom of existence.”¹⁵ For Hitler, Germany had ceased to be a world power, while Great Britain and France had achieved and maintained that status.¹⁶ But there were two programs for territorial expansion that Hitler explicitly rejected. The first of these was the nostalgic demand to restore the frontiers of 1914, which he considered an absurd aspiration; the second was the demand for the return of Germany’s African colonies, which had been lost as an outcome of World War I, which he considered entirely irrelevant to the project of securing adequate living space (*Lebensraum*) for the German people.¹⁷ Hitler’s vision for the future of Germany involved territorial expansion eastward, at the expense of Poland and the Soviet Union.¹⁸ Moreover, this was to be an empire purged not only of Jews but also of Slavs and other “undesirables.”¹⁹

There were, however, two points of disagreement among Nazis concerning this vision. The first point had to do with whether the Third Reich should be seeking to dominate the entire planet. Hitler told a group of senior officers in February 1939 that Germany had begun the process of establishing its mastery over the entire globe, and there were various symbols pointing in this direction, including the installation of a large

eagle clutching a globe atop the gigantic Berlin great hall, and a series of postage stamps in which the final stamp showed a soldier in front of the entire planet.²⁰ But there were also Nazis who thought that Germany's territorial appetite could be satisfied, even in the long term, by establishing Berlin's hegemony over Europe.²¹ The second point had to do with how, exactly, to operationalize the "imperative" to remove the Jews from German Lebensraum. As we shall see below, this second point involved two disputes—one concerning the criteria defining who was to be considered a Jew, and the second concerning whether it would be sufficient to deport the Jews or whether they should, rather, be liquidated. In the years leading up to June 1941 this second dispute remained open.

Generalplan-Ost

In the future utopia imagined by Hitler and his planners, the lands which they hoped to seize from the Soviet Union loomed large. The ill-famed (and ill-fated) *Generalplan-Ost* (General Plan East) was largely developed only after the German invasion of the USSR began on 22 June 1941.²² But just two days later, Hitler called SS-Standartenführer Dr. Konrad Meyer-Hetling, head of a unit attached to the Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationhood (RKFDV),²³ in his office on Prinz Albrechtstrasse and asked him to draw up plans for German settlement across lands to be acquired in the East.²⁴ As prepared by Meyer-Hetling, in coordination with Dr. Erhard Wetzel of the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories, the plan foresaw the removal of between 30 and 45 million Slavs, whether by deportation or liquidation, in order to make room for between 5 and 10 million German colonists, among them retired Wehrmacht soldiers.²⁵ This was to be in addition to the liquidation of Europe's Jews. Some high-ranking Nazis, however, considered these dreams to be unrealizable fantasies. For example, Rolf-Heinz Hoepfner, in charge of the Central Resettlement Office in Posen, was among those who called for realism and warned of practical difficulties in connection with the attempt to carry out a massive resettlement project at a time of war. Helmut Schubert, an economist attached to the RKFDV, seconded Hoepfner's warning, not-

ing that the plan “was too ambitious, dangerously divorced from the bigger economic picture and riddled with internal contradictions.”²⁶ Himmler, on the other hand, thought that the goals of Generalplan-Ost were reasonable and believed that the transfer of Germans to the new territories in the East could be accomplished within twenty years, that is by the 1960s.²⁷

In the Führer’s imagination, the German colonists being settled in the eastern territories would take up farming. Hitler explained his rationale in one of his speeches. “History has taught us,” he stated on that occasion, “that a nation can exist without cities, but ... a nation cannot exist without farmers. Lasting successes a government can win only if the necessity is recognized for the securing of a people’s *Lebensraum* and thus of its agricultural class.”²⁸ Although he believed in a strict hierarchy of races, with some viewed as “superior” and others as “inferior,” he nonetheless advocated a classless society for the homogeneous German state of the future, with rewards and privileges based on merit.²⁹ This could not be achieved, however, without redesigning human nature;³⁰ indeed, Alfred Rosenberg (1893–1946) admitted that he and his fellow Nazis nurtured “a deep longing for a new form of life.”³¹ Hitler also dreamt of “free education, funded by the state, for all talented youngsters,” state-funded sea-cruise vacations for workers, and steam-heated greenhouses, so that Germans could enjoy fresh fruit and fresh vegetables year-round.³² All told, this was a hugely ambitious vision. But, as Ian Kershaw has pointed out, it was too ambitious and therefore doomed to fail.³³ A regime built on a foundation of hatred (of Jews, Roma, homosexuals, et al.) and contempt (for Slavs and Latins), setting itself against all the great powers (Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States), blundering into an ill-conceived two-front war, and even declaring war on the United States could scarcely prevail in the long run. The Nazi vision involved far too much hubris. Some colonists were, in fact, resettled in the East but, as the war continued, potential candidates for resettlement were increasingly reluctant to move into a war zone. By the end of 1942, Himmler was forced to abandon his resettlement plans for western Poland and, by the summer of 1944, such German colonies as had been established in the area running from the Balkans southward to Crimea had been abandoned. At the beginning of 1943,

in belated recognition that Generalplan-Ost had ended in fiasco, Hitler called for an end to all postwar planning.³⁴

ANTI-SEMITES AND ENEMIES OF LIBERALISM

The Nazis did not fashion their vision *ex nihilo*. On the contrary, especially where the anti-Semitic dimension of that vision was concerned, they—and here, Hitler in the first place—drew on the legacy of a number of influential anti-Semitic writers active in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³⁵ Among the leading anti-Semitic writers in Hohenzollern Germany (the Second Reich, 1871–1918) were Paul de Lagarde (1827–91), Julius Langbehn (1851–1907), Theodor Fritsch (1852–1933), Guido von List (1848–1919), Wilhelm Marr (1819–1904), and Eugen Dühring (1833–1921). Other active anti-Semites in that era included Adolf Stoecker, Otto Glagau, Ernst Henrici, Otto Böckel, Hermann Ahlwardt, Adolf König, Heinrich Claß, Adolf Wahrmund, and the widely famed Heinrich von Treitschke (1834–1896).³⁶ One of the earliest works in this genre was Marr’s *The Victory of Jewry over Germanhood*, published in 1879.³⁷ In this work, Marr claimed that Jews were driven by “theocratic fanaticism” and wanted to conquer the world. In another work published the same year,³⁸ Marr alleged that Germans and Jews were engaged in a “race war.”³⁹ But Eugen Dühring’s *The Jewish Question*,⁴⁰ published two years later, has been counted as more influential than Marr’s writings.⁴¹ Marr and Dühring, like all modern anti-Semitic writers, took their cue from the work of Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau (1816–82), whose main thesis was that the races were unequal in intelligence and skills. In his view, all societies start out with a system of inequality based on racial difference but, once racial mixing reaches the point where there is only a mixed race, then that people is drawn to the idea that all people are equal.⁴² But racial mixing risks weakening the stronger race, according to Gobineau. Gobineau’s writings had a tangible influence on Hitler’s thinking.⁴³

Among other influences on Hitler’s thinking, one may mention the anti-Semitic Austrian politician Georg Ritter von Schönerer on the young Hitler,⁴⁴ and Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels, publisher of the magazine

Ostara, whom Hitler met during his Vienna years. As Ted Daniels explains, “Lanz called for a program of racial extermination against a subhuman race he called *Äfflings*, or ape-men.”⁴⁵ Another influence on Hitler was the work of the German Darwinist Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919), who urged that the German people purge themselves of everything “foreign”—including Christianity!⁴⁶ But no discussion of the influence of German anti-Semitic writers on Hitler would be complete without some mention of Paul de Lagarde, Julius Langbehn, and Theodor Fritsch (listed in order of their births). Lagarde wanted Germans to “return to the past—a past devoid of all else but the primeval voice of nature” in order to take the nation in a new direction and build a healthier future.⁴⁷ For Lagarde, the Jews were “an alien body in Germany” and he called on Germans to “put an end ... to liberalism,” as a first step to protecting Germanness from the Jews.⁴⁸ Langbehn, who leapt to fame in 1890 with the publication of his book, *Rembrandt as Educator*,⁴⁹ sang the praises of irrationalism and wanted to use occult methods to tap into the inner life force which Alfred Schuler (1865–1923) had associated with blood.⁵⁰ As for Fritsch, he was both tremendously prolific and hugely influential in his day, bringing out a stream of publications with his Hammer Press. A biological racist—unlike Haeckel, a cultural racist⁵¹—Fritsch wanted to “to create a strong, healthy German national entity (*Volkstum*), a truly German culture—by removing all the clinkers of its own weaknesses and the cinders of alien perversion.”⁵² Soon after these writers had brought out their most influential works, Arthur Moeller van den Bruck (1876–1925) renewed the assault on liberalism, publishing a book in 1922 with the prophetic title, *Das Dritte Reich*.⁵³

Two more voices contributed to the mood of the time. These were Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927) and Oswald Spengler (1880–1936). Born in Southsea, England, Chamberlain was raised by his grandmother in France but, after turning fourteen, began traveling to various spas across Europe, accompanied by a tutor, from whom he learned German. He became enamoured of German culture and history, and later moved to Germany. In 1899, he brought out his most influential book, *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*; an English translation was published in 1911,⁵⁴ and republished in a second edition the following year. In this work, he postulated that Celts, Germans,

Slavs, Greeks, and Latins constituted a superior Aryan race who were a natural racial elite; the Nordic (Teutonic) peoples stood at the apex of his racial hierarchy.⁵⁵ The Jews, in his view, were characterized by a “peculiar and absolutely un-Aryan spirit” and called them an “alien people, everlastingly alien, because—as Herder well remarks—it is indissolubly bound to an alien law that is hostile to all other peoples.”⁵⁶ Chamberlain was concerned about racial mixing and accused Jews of “infect[ing] the Indo-Europeans with Jewish blood. If that were to go on for a few centuries,” he fretted, “there would be in Europe only one single people of pure race, that of the Jews; all the rest would be a herd of pseudo-Hebraic mestizos, a people beyond all doubt degenerate physically, mentally, and morally.”⁵⁷ And since, in Chamberlain’s view, the Jewish people is “opposed to all European races” and “remains alien to our part of the world,”⁵⁸ it was strongly indicated that practical measures should be undertaken to defend the Aryan peoples of Europe; the Nazis would later act on this prescription.

Given Chamberlain’s approach, with his openly expressed hostility to Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), representative democracy was not suited to such a defense. Nor was he sympathetic to the liberal notion that confessional pluralism should be tolerated. On the contrary, he described religion as “an essential part of the political mechanism” which is “bound to exercise influence upon the whole.”⁵⁹ For Chamberlain, liberals and democrats were too absorbed with details and hence, confused. “If men did not lose their way and go astray by over-attention to the incalculable details of history,” Chamberlain warned, “they would long ago have been clear regarding the decisive importance of two things in politics, namely, race and religion.”⁶⁰

The Nazis also drew some encouragement from Oswald Spengler’s wildly popular *Decline of the West*, published in two volumes in 1918 and 1920.⁶¹ Born into a conservative petit bourgeois German family, Spengler worked as a high school history teacher and tutor, writing magazine articles to supplement his income. In spite of a harsh reception among scholars, his magnum opus left its mark on the reading public of his age. In this work, he excoriated the influence of capitalists on democratic government and on the press. He distinguished between high culture, which he felt was the domain of people who were repulsed by capital-

ism's dominance, and low culture, the product of capitalism. High culture was what mattered for Spengler and, in his view, democracy was injurious to high culture. He therefore called for a return to authority, hoping for a strong and cultured leader, and sketched out a proposal for a corporate state, which anticipated the later Fascist model. These features of his work encouraged Nazis to think of Spengler as a kindred spirit, even as a proto-Nazi, and Nazi figures Gregor Strasser and Ernst Hanfstaengl invited him to join the Nazi party. Spengler, however, declined to do so, believing that the Nazis were immature, and referring to Hitler, dismissively, as a "heroic tenor" rather than a hero. Toward the end of 1933, he brought out his book *Years of Decision*, in which he gave vent to criticisms of Hitler's regime—among other things for being too narrowly German.⁶² He died three years later, just three weeks before he would have reached his fifty-sixth birthday, leaving an ambiguous legacy.

THE RISE OF THE NAZIS

The National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP), or Nazi Party, grew out of the German Workers' Party⁶³ founded by Anton Drexler, a German nationalist bitterly opposed to the Treaty of Versailles, in 1919. The Deutsche Arbeiterpartei was explicitly anti-Semitic and wanted Germany to be "judenfrei" (free of Jews). Adolf Hitler, then a corporal in the German army, was sent by army intelligence to investigate this party; but the young Hitler involved himself in one of the small party's internal disputes and impressed the other members with his rhetorical skills. They invited him to join. Hitler accepted the invitation, becoming the party's fifty-fifth member. On 24 February 1920, the party assumed the name by which it has come down in history and, on 28 July 1921, Hitler became chairman of the party. Subsequently, the party adopted the swastika as its symbol. In 1926, the party set up the Hitler Youth as an organization for adolescent boys.⁶⁴ The party had grown significantly during 1921–22 and, over succeeding years, attracted both lower-middle class and upper-middle class support. Indeed, the NSDAP made major inroads among Protestant voters in upper middle-class dis-

tricts in fourteen major cities of Germany in elections conducted from September 1930 to November 1932. Moreover, the strength of Nazi support proved to be directly correlated with the income of the given urban electorate.⁶⁵

Under the Treaty of Versailles (1919), which formally ended hostilities among the major powers of Europe, Germany had been forced to cede land to Denmark, Belgium, France, Poland, Lithuania, and the city-state of Danzig, to pay huge reparations to the French, to allow France to occupy the Saarland until a plebiscite would be allowed in 1935, and to be saddled with exclusive war guilt for the outbreak and casualties of World War I. All of this engendered deep resentment among Germans. Moreover, after the American stock market crash of 1929, the German economy went into a nosedive, with a financial collapse in 1931. Unemployment was close to 6 million, and, by 1932, about 25 percent of the urban working class supported the Nazis. There were street fights between Nazis and communists in various German cities. Then, during the presidential election campaign of 1932, the violence of Nazi stormtroopers prompted authorities to ban the *Sturmabteilung* (SA) and *Schutzstaffel* (SS) on 13 April 1932. At the end of the month, however, the Nazi Party registered decisive gains in regional elections in Prussia and followed this up with additional gains in Bavaria, Württemberg, Anhalt, and Hamburg.⁶⁶ At this point, President Paul von Hindenburg (1847–1934) dismissed Heinrich Brüning from the chancellorship and appointed the conservative Franz von Papen (1879–1969) in his stead. Papen now lifted the ban on the SA and SS, and dissolved the Reichstag, clearing the way for new parliamentary elections.

The Nazis campaigned under the slogan “Deutschland, erwache!” (Germany, wake up!). They promised:

- to effect an economic recovery and to put people back to work
- to repudiate the demonization of Germany in connection with World War I
- to restore the moral health of the nation
- to realize German expansion (*Lebensraum*)
- to remove Jews from positions of power and authority
- and to set in motion a process of national rebirth that would not just wipe out the humiliation of the defeat in World War I, revers-

ing the losses at Versailles, but also strengthen and purify the German race, and conquer vast stretches of land, creating a vast European empire ruled from Berlin.⁶⁷

The Nazis blamed the Jews for Germany's defeat in World War I and made much of the Jews' alleged domination in the German economy, especially—so the Nazis claimed—in the banking sector and on the stock market. In fact, however, of Europe's 10 million Jews, less than 5 percent lived in Germany and Jews accounted for only 2 percent of German bankers and stockholders.⁶⁸ Moreover, Jews did not dominate in any of the professions or commercial occupations.

The July 1932 elections handed the Nazis their greatest electoral success to date, with 37.3 percent of the vote, the largest share won by any political party. Even so, Hindenburg refused to appoint Hitler chancellor, inviting him instead to join the government as a minister; Hindenburg also told Hitler to get the SA, the party's paramilitary arm, under control and supported a KPD (Communist Party of Germany) vote of no confidence in the parliament. Under the circumstances, Papen called for fresh elections, which were duly held on 6 November. This time, the Nazi vote slipped somewhat, but the Nazi Party remained the largest party in the Reichstag.⁶⁹

Once again, Hindenburg urged Hitler to join Papen's government, but Hitler refused to enter the government unless he would be appointed chancellor. Meanwhile, Papen was not able to put together a majority coalition (without the Nazis), and most of the cabinet were opposed to seeing Papen reappointed. He was accordingly replaced by Kurt von Schleicher, Papen's erstwhile defense minister. But Schleicher did not last in office even as long as Papen. Hindenburg eventually bowed to the inevitable and, on 30 January 1933, appointed Hitler as chancellor at the head of a conservative-dominated coalition government; Papen was appointed vice chancellor.

Upon Hitler's appointment as Reichskanzler, Joseph Goebbels (1897–1945), the Gauleiter of Berlin, organized a massive torchlit procession, accompanied by SA bands, that same evening, to celebrate Hitler's appointment. Winding its way past Hitler and Hindenburg as they watched from the balcony of the Reich Chancellery, the procession sent an un-

ambiguous message that Hitler's victory marked a historic break with the past. Outside the Nazi Party and especially among those on the political left, the opinion was widespread that Hitler was only a front man for a cabinet of "reactionaries" (as the left described them) dominated by Alfred Hugenberg, Papen, and others. There was also a widespread willingness to give Hitler a chance to see if he could solve Germany's burdensome problems. Barely a month later, the Reichstag was incinerated.

But even before the Reichstag fire, Germany's new authorities immediately set out to suppress anti-Nazi manifestations and suspended the Catholic newspaper, *Germania*. On 19 February 1933, the Socialist Cultural Association had intended to hold a meeting in the People's Theater on Buslowplatz. But at the last minute, the Nazis announced that an open-air brass band concert would be held on the Buslowplatz; in consequence, the police withdrew permission for the socialist meeting and cordoned off the square. Thomas Mann (1875–1955), the Nobel prize winner, was supposed to address the socialist meeting; instead, he presented his talk to a Free Speech Congress later the same day. Following Mann's talk, Dr. Wolfgang Heine spoke to the Congress about freedom in art, complaining that brutality was being officially defended and fostered by the Nazis; at that, police broke up the Free Speech Congress.⁷⁰ A week later, on 27 February, an attempt was made to burn the Reichstag. The attempt resulted in considerable damage, rendering the building unusable. In response, the regime detained 130 known communists, among them five Reichstag deputies, and suspended the communist newspaper, *Die Rote Fahne* (The Red Flag).⁷¹ The regime also arrested Georgi Dimitrov (1882–1949), a Bulgarian communist who was residing in Germany at the time as head of the Central European section of the Communist International. Dimitrov was charged with complicity in the Reichstag fire but his calm defense at his Leipzig trial made a serious impression on all concerned and he was acquitted of the charges.

At one time, the general opinion was that the fire had been set by the Nazis themselves. Nowadays, however, some scholars are more inclined to concede that the fire was due to arson committed by a young Dutch communist, Martinus van der Lubbe.⁷² But, whoever may have been

responsible, the Nazis put the fire to use, promulgating a decree the following day, by which some of the most basic civil rights were suspended. The decree also granted the police discretionary powers to arrest persons at will and detain them in “protective custody.” The police began rounding up communists. The issuance of this decree provoked very little criticism; indeed, most middle-class Germans welcomed the arrests of communists.⁷³ Already at this early stage, however, the Nazis showed their readiness to use an inverted logic under which even those opposed to their enemies were construed as foes. Specifically, the police and courts used the aforementioned anticommunist decree to repress also the Jehovah’s Witnesses, on the spurious argument that their “divisiveness” worked to the advantage of communism. The overtly anticommunist content of the Witnesses’ periodical, *The Watchtower*, was set aside as irrelevant and stiff sentences were handed down on the Witnesses, who were accused further of abusing religion for political purposes.⁷⁴ Now, in the wake of the Reichstag fire, Reichskanzler Hitler presented a long speech to the members of that body, calling for a break with the past and a “cleansing of all harmful elements” in society.⁷⁵ With Hindenburg’s assent, seven sections of the Weimar constitution were now suspended. These sections dealt with individual rights and civil liberties. At this point, the Nazis arrested many communists and Social Democrats.⁷⁶ It was under such conditions that fresh elections to the Reichstag were held on 5 March 1933. Turnout was 88.7 percent, with 43.9 percent voting for the NSDAP. The next largest vote went to the Social Democrats (18.3%), followed by the KPD (12.3%) and the Center Party, a Catholic party (11.2%). No other party won more than 8 percent of the vote. With this, the Nazis controlled 288 seats in the 647-seat Reichstag, a large bloc, although even now not a majority.⁷⁷ The Nazis formed a coalition with the fifth-place Nationalists, who held fifty-two seats. With the support of the Center Party, among others, the Nazi-Nationalist coalition was able to obtain passage in the Reichstag of the so-called Enabling Act on 23 March, whereby the Reichstag vested the cabinet with legislative authority (otherwise reserved to the Reichstag itself) for a period of four years; the Enabling Act was renewed in 1937, 1941, and finally in 1943.⁷⁸ The Enabling Act granted the government *carte blanche* for four years, to pass budgets, issue new laws, and even alter

the constitution, all without consulting parliament.⁷⁹ In the wake of this act, the Nazis suppressed all rival political parties, including the Center Party, “and began the process of interning political opponents in concentration camps, dissolving trade unions, and subjecting the state to federal authority in an unprecedented policy of coordination (*Gleichschaltung*).”⁸⁰ On 31 March came the issuance of the Provisional Law for the Coordination of the Länder with the Reich, which effectively sanctioned the control the Nazis had seized by force. As Walter Rauscher has noted, “Within just ten weeks, National Socialism had brought all decisive power instruments of the state under its direct control.”⁸¹ On 10 May, the Nazis seized all the property of the Social Democratic Party, including its headquarters and newspapers.⁸² Subsequently, on 14 July 1933, the regime issued a law (on the basis of the Enabling Act) banning all political parties other than the Nazi Party. The Nazis moved quickly to assert control over all societies and professional organizations—suppressing some, fusing others. Independent labor unions were shut down, and all those societies and professional organizations allowed to exist had to accept that Nazi appointees would dominate their respective executive committees.⁸³

The Concordat with the Holy See

Hitler wanted Germans’ primary loyalty to be to him and for Germans to accept Nazism as their primary ideology or *Weltanschauung*, as Hitler called it. The Catholic Church was rather obviously a potential obstacle to these ambitions as well as to the Nazi project to redesign Christianity (see below) and to “create a new type of human being.”⁸⁴ Indeed, in September 1930, the bishop of Mainz banned the NSDAP from operating in his diocese and, in February 1931, Bavaria’s bishops issued a joint pastoral letter to warn about the Nazis; by the summer of 1932, the entire German episcopate had endorsed this condemnation of the Nazi Party. It was, then, understandable that, as early as March 1933, the regime was assigning priority to achieving a rapprochement with the Catholic Church and, after a conciliatory speech by Hitler, the German bishops lifted the ban on membership in the Nazi Party.⁸⁵ Negotiations between

the Holy See and Berlin moved along expeditiously and were concluded on 20 July 1933. Commenting on this result that same month, Hitler declared, "It appears to me that through the conclusion of the Concordat ... sufficient guarantees have been given that Reich citizens of the Roman Catholic faith will henceforth put themselves *unconditionally* in the service of the new National Socialist State."⁸⁶ With this, the regime hoped that it had defanged the Catholic episcopate and, indeed, for the time being after the signing of the Concordat, the bishops relied on private protests rather than public ones to challenge policies of the Third Reich of which they disapproved.⁸⁷

Under the terms of the Concordat, the regime guaranteed that the Church's parishes could instruct its members in the articles of the faith and administer the sacraments, and also guaranteed that the regime would not exert any pressure or influence in the appointment of bishops and pastors. On the other hand, the Church also agreed that it would not engage itself in social and political issues, thus turning its back on the legacy of the papal encyclicals *Rerum novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931). Article 9 guaranteed that the clergy "may not be required by judicial and other authorities to give information concerning facts that have been confided to them while exercising their pastoral duties," thus protecting the confidentiality of the confessional, while Article 25 stated that "Orders and religious congregations are entitled to establish and conduct private schools, within the framework of the general laws and conditions fixed by law. These private schools confer the same rights as the State schools."⁸⁸

But these guarantees proved to be insufficient. To begin with, the Concordat did not grant the Church the right to do charity work, and the regime began preventing the Church from collecting funds and goods for its charity work. Second, although the Holy See agreed in the Concordat that its various organizations and associations would abstain from political activity, the document neither provided a clear definition of what constituted political activity nor listed Catholic organizations and associations to be excluded from any possible ban. This had the result that, in spite of the promises about the rights of private Church-run schools, the Nazi regime imposed restrictions on the work of confessional schools as well as on youth activities that the Church wanted to

organize. In fact, “by 1939, all denominational schools had been abolished, along with ecclesiastical private and boarding schools.”⁸⁹

By 1937, the Holy See had had enough and, in mid-March of that year with the active assistance of Michael Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich and Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli (the future Pope Pius XII), Pope Pius XI issued his encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* (With burning concern). The pope departed from the tradition of writing in Italian, penning his encyclical in German, to make it clear that it was addressed to the German people and their regime. Early in this document the pope warned, “Whoever follows that so-called pre-Christian German conception of substituting a dark and impersonal destiny for the personal God, denies thereby the Wisdom and Providence of God ... Neither is he a believer in God.”⁹⁰ The encyclical continued with a pointed criticism of the Nazi regime: “Whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State, or a particular form of State, or the depositories of power ... above their standard values and divinizes them to an idolatrous level, distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God.”⁹¹ The pope had the encyclical read from the pulpits of Catholic churches across Germany. Needless to say, the Nazis were enraged.⁹²

Consolidating the New Regime

In the meantime, moving with a speed that shook foreign observers, the Nazis purged the civil service of Jews and Social Democrats, and appointed Alfred Richter, a member of the SA, to serve as Reich police commissioner for Hamburg on 5 March 1933. As Tim Kirk has noted, “there was no constitutional basis either for the appointment of Reich commissioners or for the formation of Nazi regional governments,” which were also set up at this time.⁹³

By this point, Hitler euphoria was in full swing. Germany now witnessed a proliferation of panegyric ditties. Tree-planting ceremonies were also put to political use, with the planting of Hitler oaks and Hitler lindens in hundreds of towns and villages, many of which also declared Hitler an honorary citizen of their respective communities. The trees used in these ceremonies were planted with an eye to differences in

foliage, so that, when viewed from the air, one could clearly make out a swastika.

Although his star was clearly rising, Hitler still wanted to reassure his conservative allies, for whom the aggressive actions of the SA were increasingly troubling. For that reason, Hitler was intent on a certain degree of caution and, at that point in time, on covering his actions with a cloak of legality. There were other considerations inclining Hitler to proceed cautiously for the time being, especially a concern lest moving too swiftly against German Jews could have economic or foreign policy repercussions, and above all a desire to avoid any actions which might result in the 1936 Olympic Games being moved from Berlin to some other location.⁹⁴ A directive from 1933 counseled that if, in the next elections, the Nazis should secure “an absolute majority, Jews will be deprived of their rights by legal process. If, however, the NSDAP receives power through a coalition, the rights of German Jews will be undermined through administrative means.”⁹⁵

But radicals were not content with this approach and, in the first two weeks of March 1933, the SA engaged in acts of hooliganism and terror and initiated boycotts of Jewish-owned enterprises across Germany. Not only were the SA's actions potentially damaging to Hitler's strategy, but they were being carried out in defiance of Hitler's policy of that time. It was in direct response to his loss of control over the SA that Hitler created a rival terror organization, the Gestapo⁹⁶ during March–April 1933; forty-year-old Hermann Göring (1893–1946), who had served in the German infantry during World War I and who had joined the Nazi party in 1922, was named Gestapo chief.⁹⁷ By early summer of 1934, the SA, under the command of Ernst Röhm, had 3 to 4 million men under arms, which was more than the army had, and, in spite of Hitler's warning, had continued to engage in military activities.⁹⁸ Röhm was a “freebooting adventurer” who at one time had served as military adviser to the Bolivian army,⁹⁹ and the SA posed a direct challenge to Hitler's authority. While conservatives such as Papen, then still vice chancellor, openly criticized the SA, Hitler—egged on by SS chief Heinrich Himmler (1900–45), Hermann Göring, and the Wehrmacht¹⁰⁰—prepared to strike. Early in the morning of 30 June 1934, SS troops accompanied by Hitler arrested the SA leaders at Bad Wiessee in Bavaria

and took them to Stadelheim prison, where several of them, including Röhm, were murdered; other SA personnel were murdered in Berlin and Silesia about the same time. But SA leaders were not the only ones to be eliminated in this purge. Others murdered at this time included Gregor Strasser, former chancellor Schleicher, his wife, General von Bredow, Edgar Jung, Papen's speechwriter, and former general state commissar von Kahr.¹⁰¹ The murders, although illegal, met with general approval among Germans. What the German population did not grasp in applauding first the suppression of the communists and now the murder of various SA personnel and others, was that patterns of illegality, if not checked, can escalate, targeting additional groups for repression.

At this point, Papen was forced to step down as vice chancellor and was named ambassador to Austria. The only remaining obstacle to Hitler's assumption of total power was President Hindenburg, the decorated field marshal who had served as president since 1925. But on 2 August 1934, Hindenburg passed away at the age of 86. Hitler now took over the functions of the office of president, although he declined to assume the title, in an act that he chose to portray as motivated by deference to the deceased president. Instead, he assumed the title *Führer* (leader).

THE ECONOMIC PROGRAM

As of 1932, unemployment stood at 29.9 percent in Germany, 22.1 percent in Great Britain, and 15.4 percent in France; already the following year, unemployment began to sink in all three countries, and continued to sink.¹⁰² It appears, thus, that at least part of the reason for the upturn in the German economy at this time was the more general world economic recovery. But that is not the entire story. The Nazi economic program relied on three main instruments to revive the economy and solve the unemployment problem:

- government-funded public works
- the establishment of economic self-sufficiency, using a system of clearing accounts to promote trade with smaller states in Central and Eastern Europe

- expansion of the military (in contravention of the Treaty of Versailles).

More particularly, the Nazi economic program was based on a vision of a managed economy. Like Stalin, but unlike Mussolini, Hitler insisted that the ruling class had to control, direct, and plan the economy. But unlike Stalin, Hitler did not see the need for the state to expropriate private entrepreneurs. Rather, as Hitler told an early Nazi rally, capitalism had “to become the servant of the state and not its master.”¹⁰³ That meant as well that the economy had to serve the interests of the entire nation and advance the “preservation of the race.”¹⁰⁴

Although he was prepared to countenance state ownership of economic sectors when circumstances seemed to dictate such a solution, Hitler was convinced that private enterprise was more conducive than a state-owned economy to competition and technical innovation. Thus, in the Third Reich, private enterprise and extensive state planning co-existed side by side. The result in Germany (as also in the Soviet Union, for that matter) was the development of new forms of state economic intervention on the part of authorities who prioritized political considerations over economic goals.¹⁰⁵

In June 1934, Hitler asked Hjalmar Schacht, then head of the Reichsbank and considered an economic genius, to assume the post of minister of the economy. Schacht had already seen that a one-day boycott of Jewish shops organized by the Nazis on 5 April 1933 had hurt not only Jewish shopkeepers but also the German economy itself,¹⁰⁶ and did not want to see Berlin’s policy vis-à-vis the Jews undermine his efforts with the economy. Therefore, before agreeing to assume the post of minister, Schacht asked Hitler how he would be expected to treat the Jews. According to Schacht, Hitler replied: “In economics the Jews can carry on exactly as they have up to now.”¹⁰⁷ Thus reassured, Schacht accepted the appointment. Three months later, Schacht, introduced a plan involving state control of foreign trade and currency exchange. By December 1935, Germany was recording a trade surplus and industrial production had increased by nearly 50 percent since Hitler had become chancellor.¹⁰⁸ During the winter of 1935–36, however, the economy began to slump. Workers were increasingly reluctant to shout “Sieg Heil!” Indeed, for

a while in early 1936, there was even talk of a military coup to remove Hitler. But Hitler consolidated his power with two bold strokes, which Britain and France failed to oppose: the remilitarization of the Rhineland on 7 March 1936, in violation of the Treaty of Versailles—which gave rise to spectacular jubilation among Germans—and the annexation of the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia in September 1938. Had Britain and France stood firm on either of these occasions, it is probable that Hitler would have backed down and quite possible that he would have been either removed from power through a military coup or forced to give up some of his power. Their failure to show resolve enabled Hitler to continue to build his personal power.

In September 1936, Hitler addressed a Nazi Party congress in Nuremberg, delivering an anti-Bolshevik tirade. After this speech, Hitler's office was flooded with letters full of adulation. One example may serve to illustrate the point:

My Führer! ... I feel compelled by unceasing love to thank our creator daily for, through his grace, giving us and the entire German people such a wonderful Führer, and in a time ... when our beautiful dear Fatherland was threatened with the most horrible destruction through Jewish bolshevism... . It is a pleasure for me ... to pray for you, my Führer, that the Lord God who has created you as a tool for German-ity should keep you healthy, that the love of the people towards you should grow... . A Heil to the Führer for victory...¹⁰⁹

As early as 9 February 1933, addressing a meeting of the government office for unemployment, Hitler made clear that his "absolute priority" was rearmament.¹¹⁰ The Nazi economic program moved forward. The authorities used governmental investment to drive research, development, and production in the armaments industry and electro-chemical industry, and set up retraining programs to train workers for employment in these industries. Approximately 21 billion Reichsmarks of the 27.5 billion invested by the German government in 1933–36 were earmarked for rearmament, with an additional 5.5 billion Reichsmarks allocated for road construction and other projects relevant for military use.¹¹¹ From 1936 to 1940, about 50 percent of all industrial investment

in the German economy went into the arms industry. The result of this regime-driven mobilization of labor and other resources was that, by 1938, unemployment in Germany had been reduced to just 1.9 percent—compared to 12.9 percent in Great Britain, 7.8 percent in France, and 26.4 percent in the United States.¹¹² As the economy recovered, many hitherto unemployed workers who had previously supported the Social Democrats or the Communists transferred their loyalties to Hitler and the Nazi Party, giving Hitler credit for what looked like an economic miracle.¹¹³ During these years, the average workweek increased steadily from forty-three hours per week in 1933 to forty-seven hours per week in 1938 and forty-eight in 1939. As the German economy rebounded, Hitler sent around a memorandum (in August 1936), instructing government agencies and the military to prepare for war within four years.¹¹⁴

In the meantime, Schacht had come into conflict with Julius Streicher, publisher of the periodical *Der Stürmer* and head of the Central Committee for Defense against Jewish Atrocity and Boycott Propaganda, over the latter's public designation of racially approved enterprises as "German enterprises." This initiative, Schacht argued, hurt German economic recovery as well as those "Aryan" workers employed at enterprises now designated as "Jewish" (in many cases misleadingly so, since enterprises thus labelled were often owned by non-Jews).¹¹⁵ By November 1937, Schacht was fed up with the increasing priority given to anti-Semitic policies, even at the expense of economic recovery, and resigned as economics minister. Göring was now given control of economic policy and Schacht's successor as Economics Minister would have to take his orders from Göring. The enterprising Gestapo head used his new authority to make himself rich.

RACIAL "PURITY" AND HEALTHY ARYANS

For the Nazis, as already noted, race was the supreme principle of state and it was the state's mission to protect racial purity, to relegate members of diverse races to tasks suited for their respective races, and to purify and improve the Aryan race. This self-arrogated mission inspired a concerted Nazi program to remove all those who did not fit their image of

healthy Aryans, including the physically disabled and developmentally delayed, and led to the incarceration of Jews, Roma, and homosexuals, and later to their extermination, mostly through gassing. Scholarly consensus holds that about 6 million Jews were killed by the Nazis.

As early as May 1933, the laws regulating abortion, which had been liberalized during the years of the Weimar Republic, were revised. Under the new laws, women whose offspring were considered “racially and genetically desirable” would no longer have access to abortion, subject to up to fifteen years in prison if the woman managed to get an abortion. By contrast, those who were viewed as racially or genetically undesirable would have easy access to abortion and, in some cases, were even subjected to involuntary abortions.¹¹⁶

In association with this, the regime issued a Law on Sterilization on 14 July 1933, ignoring objections from Vice Chancellor Papen, a Catholic, and authorizing the involuntary sterilization of persons suffering from certain illnesses held to be hereditary. But even being a bit slow at one’s work or having been a member of the KPD could be ground for sterilization. Between 1934 and 1945, as already noted, at least 320,000 men and women were sterilized under this law.¹¹⁷ In addition, the Nazis began administering lethal injections to severely handicapped babies in the first half of 1939; by the end of the war, about 5,000 infants had been killed in this way or by starving them to death. In October 1939, Hitler ordered that this program of sterilization be extended to adults, and set up a secret agency to carry out this policy. The order was backdated to 1 September, the day that German troops invaded Poland, in a transparent attempt to associate the program with the imperatives of war.

According to Michael Haas, Hitler authorized the murder of about 200,000 developmentally delayed, mentally ill, or physically handicapped persons, classified as “life unworthy of life.”¹¹⁸ Gas chambers were actually constructed in six mental hospitals and patients at other hospitals were transferred to these for extermination. Later, mobile gassing vans were introduced under the auspices of this program. The program’s bureaucracy moved to a new location at Tiergartenstrasse 4 in Berlin in April 1939, and henceforth the program was known as the T4 program. From the Nazis’ point of view, their victims were ‘*lebensunwertes Leben*’—life unworthy of life.

But the Nazis encountered strong opposition from the Catholic Church to both their sterilization program and euthanasia. As early as January 1934, when the sterilization program went into operation, Catholic priests across Germany spoke out against the scheme, stressing two points:

- A. It is not permitted to request sterilization for oneself or to submit others to sterilization. This is Catholic teaching.
- B. According to the declaration of our Holy Father, a Catholic may not morally request sterilization for himself or order sterilization for others.¹¹⁹

Later, after the launching of the Nazi liquidation program, German Catholic bishops repeatedly condemned the practice in unmistakable terms. Typical is a letter sent to the authorities at the Reichschancellery on 11 August 1940 by Adolf Cardinal Bertram of Breslau, spelling out that “euthanasia is incompatible with the Christian code of ethics, no matter how profoundly one’s sympathy might wish to [see] an early termination of suffering of a dying patient.” He further stressed the “unqualified inadmissibility of acts of this kind” and urged that no exceptions were permissible.¹²⁰ Michael Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich took up this question on 6 November of the same year, writing to Minister of Justice Franz Gürtner. In his letter, the Munich archbishop recalled that already in 1934 the Catholic bishops had underlined the incompatibility of euthanasia with Christian teaching and closed by emphasizing that “even during wartime one may not discard the everlasting foundations of the moral order, nor the fundamental rights of the individual.”¹²¹ Pope Pius XII issued similar protests.

Protestants tended to offer a mixed reaction to the Nazi eugenics program. For some time, various Protestant progressives had viewed notions of racial improvement with favor, and within the Protestant Church itself, there were persons such as Hans Harmsen who had advocated racial improvement since the 1920s. Thus, it is not surprising that even the Confessing Church of which Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–45) was a key founder (which rejected Nazi tampering with Christian theology) did not object to programs of involuntary sterilization. Indeed, among Protestant eugenicists such as Otmar von Verschuer (1896–1969),

there was genuine enthusiasm for the activist approach to racial hygiene (as eugenics had originally been called).¹²² To carry out this program, the regime took steps to induct the country's 300,000 medical care practitioners, welfare workers, statisticians, and academics into Nazi thinking about health and healthcare.¹²³ But increasingly, protests spread beyond the confines of the Churches and Hitler was forced to abandon the program of liquidating the mentally ill and handicapped in August 1941, but, by then, some 70,273 persons had been liquidated under the T4 program.¹²⁴

In the meantime, a series of anti-Jewish statutes known as the Nuremberg Laws came into force on 15 September 1935. These laws prohibited marriage or sexual relations between non-Jewish Germans and non-Aryans, forbade Jewish households to employ German maids under age forty-five, and deprived Jews of German citizenship. In the wake of the issuance of the Nuremberg Laws, as Michael Burleigh has noted, "something as innocuous as a handshake between two acquaintances on the street became a matter for rapid calculation and moral choice."¹²⁵ The category of non-Aryans included not only Jews but also Roma and blacks. Tramps and beggars, estimated to number between 300,000 and 500,000 in September 1933, also came in for treatment. Tramps classified as orderly were sent to perform compulsory labor, in exchange for lodging and food. Tramps classified as disorderly were put in prison; many of these were also sterilized. One Nazi expert stated: "In the case of a long period without work on the open road where he is entirely free to follow his own desires and instincts [the tramp] is in danger of becoming a freedom fanatic."¹²⁶ The preventive detention and involuntary castration of criminals were also authorized (under the Law against Compulsive Criminality, passed in November 1933).

It was clear enough to all concerned that Jews were considered non-Aryans. But these laws could not be enforced until criteria had been set down to define just who was or was not a Jew. The "Aryan Paragraph" of 1933 had specified that anyone with at least one Jewish grandparent would be considered a Jew. But this had been considered a provisional definition, pending later refinement.¹²⁷ Radicals, led by Gerhard Wagner, head of the National Socialist Physicians Association, wanted to see the adoption of the "one-eighth principle," meaning that anyone with even

just one Jewish great-grandparent would be considered Jewish. But, conservative officials in the ministries of justice and internal affairs argued that banning mixed marriages was impractical and put up a “massive resistance”; there were also protests from the Christian Churches.¹²⁸ Bernhard Lösener and his associates at the Ministry of Internal Affairs were opposed to counting persons with just one Jewish great-grandparent as Jews, since this would have included about a million persons, almost all of whom were completely assimilated into German culture. For their part, officials in the Ministry of Internal Affairs wanted to keep the number of persons subject to discrimination and persecution as small as possible.¹²⁹ On 14 November 1935, Hitler accepted the Ministry’s argument that persons with one Jewish parent who did not belong to the Jewish religion should not be classified as Jews. Subsequently, on 6 November 1935, Hitler reached a decision largely accommodating the standpoint of the Ministry, so that “half-Jews” married to “Aryans” and not affiliated with the Jewish religion would be classified as Aryans. With this, about 200,000 “half-Jews” were to be treated as loyal citizens.¹³⁰ Hans Mommsen has suggested that, in adopting a less radical course than he had originally favored, Hitler bore in mind that enlarging the number of persons classified as Jews could provoke resentment or have other negative repercussions among members of the Aryan majority.¹³¹

THE LEBENSBOHN PROGRAM

Alongside programs to sterilize or kill those deemed unworthy of the German race, there was also a program to foster births on the part of parents deemed racially desirable. This was the Lebensborn (or Fountain of Life) program set up on 12 December 1935 as part of the SS Office of Race and Settlement.¹³² Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS, listed the goals of the program as follows:

- aid for racially and biologically pure families
- the accommodation of racially and biologically pure mothers
- care of the children from the above
- care for the mothers.¹³³

Based in Munich, the program leaders were especially interested in encouraging members of the SS to have children and the program initially operated facilities where the wives of SS officers could give birth and obtain help with family affairs. The program also accepted unmarried women who were pregnant, provided that both the woman in question and her mate were judged to be of good racial stock.

The first Lebensborn home opened in 1936 in Steinhöring, a village close to Munich. The first such home outside Germany was opened in Norway in 1941. Altogether there were ten Lebensborn homes in Germany, nine in Norway, and a few in other parts of occupied Europe. In Norway specifically, the program was oriented to helping children born from unions between Norwegian women and German soldiers, unions that were encouraged by the fact that, in Norway, German soldiers were often quartered in private homes.¹³⁴ Altogether, between 10,000 and 12,000 children were born to such unions in wartime Norway; several hundred of them were sent to Germany to be raised by the families of their fathers, but most stayed in Norway. Later, during the war years, Aryan-looking Polish children were kidnapped by Lebensborn officials and assigned to German families to raise. Many of these families were unaware of the details surrounding the removal of the children from their original families.¹³⁵

TREATMENT OF HOMOSEXUALS

Given the Nazi regime's interest in stimulating births, it is not surprising that it disapproved of homosexuality. In fact, male homosexuality had already been criminalized under Paragraph 175 of the penal code of 1871. Despite the efforts of some Nazis to criminalize also female homosexuality, the viewpoint prevailed that lesbianism did not ultimately threaten the Nazi program in the same way that male homosexuality did.¹³⁶ This did not prevent authorities from arresting and incarcerating lesbians on other pretexts, such as alleged political opposition or alleged Jewish blood, and many lesbian women tried to find safety by entering into marriages with gay men. Gay men were subject to various penalties, including incarcerations, castration, deportation to France, and, in the

case of members of the SS and police who were found to be gay, execution.¹³⁷ Incarcerated homosexuals who volunteered for castration could be rewarded with a reduction of their sentences. In addition, experiments were conducted at the Buchenwald concentration camp to determine if homosexual men could be “cured” by hormonal treatments.¹³⁸

RACIALISM, ANTI-SEMITISM, AND THE HOLOCAUST

Hostility to homosexuality was not, however, the Nazis’ deepest aversion; rather, race remained of central interest to the Nazis, who passed some 400 racial laws during their twelve years in power. Some non-German groups were considered to be objectively German already or to be Germanizable. Among these were:

- the Kashubians, descendants of a Slavic tribe in West Prussia, who had maintained their own language and culture in spite of pressures for Germanization during the Second Empire (1871–1918) and for Polonization after 1918, and who were considered suitable for “Germanization” by Nazi authorities;
- the Sorbs (no relation to Serbs), descendants of West Slavic tribes inhabiting Upper and Lower Lusatia, whose distinct identity and culture were simply denied by the Nazis, who described them as “Wendish-speaking” Germans and who, toward the end of the war, considered moving the Sorbs en masse to the mining districts of Alsace-Lorraine;
- the Slovenes, some but not all of whom were considered Germanizable.¹³⁹

It was, however, the Jews who remained at the center of Nazi interest.

The Nazis construed the presence of Jews in Europe as a question (*die Judenfrage*) and, as such, it had to be solved. Immediately after their seizure of power, as already noted, Nazi hoodlums ransacked department stores owned by Jews in some cities, arresting Jews who were communists or socialists, and incarcerating them in barracks, factories, breweries, water towers, restaurants, bars, and even private residences which had hurriedly been converted into make-shift concentration camps.¹⁴⁰ There

were about 100 such “wild camps,” as they were called, in Berlin alone as of the spring of 1933. Already at the end of March 1933, at the time that the boycott of Jewish businesses, goods, physicians, and lawyers was being prepared, the Nazi regime also called for the restriction of the admission of Jews into universities.¹⁴¹ At the time, many Germans sent flowers to their Jewish friends as tokens of sympathy, and, in the cities, the German public continued for the time being to purchase their goods without regard to the ownership of the shop. But, for all that, Jewish businesses dependent on syndicates and cartels were immediately faced with the prospect of economic ruin.¹⁴² Later, as the anti-Semitic campaign went into high gear, the early public support for Jewish businesses withered away. In 1932, there were some 50,000 Jewish-owned small businesses in Germany; by July 1938, only 9,000 of these were still in operation.¹⁴³

Soon after came passage of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, which removed all Jews from governmental posts. Then, on 14 July 1933, a law was passed authorizing the government to revoke naturalizations that had been granted between 9 November 1918 and 30 January 1933. This was aimed at the roughly 150,000 *Ostjuden* (eastern Jews), who had fled to Germany from Russia and Eastern Europe beginning in the 1880s. This was followed, two months later, by a Hereditary Farm Law, which ruled that Jews were not allowed to own farmland or engage in farming. Since there were almost no Jewish farmers, this had only a minimal effect on Germany’s Jews. Then, between 1933 and May 1935, there was a lull and the Jewish newspaper *Jüdische Rundschau* speculated in November 1933 that, within the more narrowly defined legal limits in which they were now allowed to operate, Jewish economic life would be—so the paper suggested—guaranteed.¹⁴⁴ In the immediate aftermath of Hitler’s takeover, about 37,000 Jews had left Germany, followed by an additional 23,000 in 1934. But by the beginning of 1935, some Jews allowed themselves to believe that the worst was behind them, and during the first few months of 1935 about 10,000 Jews who had fled the country earlier returned to Germany.¹⁴⁵

This lull ended in May 1935, with the passage of a new Military Service Law that made Aryan ancestry a requirement for military service; Jewish military veterans felt humiliated and it was obvious to everyone

that this law in effect declared that Jews were second-class citizens.¹⁴⁶ In any event, anti-Semitism was rife and, by 1937, some municipalities were announcing their desire to be “Judenfrei.” Among other things, all persons classified as Jews were required to have Jewish-sounding first names.

The Nazi regime was, by then, waiting for a pretext to escalate its campaign of violence against the Jews. That pretext was provided on 7 November 1938, when Herschel Grynszpan, a seventeen-year-old German-born Polish Jew, shot Ernst vom Rath, a junior diplomat in the German Embassy in Paris.¹⁴⁷ Two days later, vom Rath died of his wounds. The same night, stormtroopers, members of the SS, and Hitler Youth went on a violent rampage against Jewish businesses and communities, looting homes and shops, setting them on fire, and destroying also synagogues, in what has come down as Kristallnacht.

In many towns, gangs of stormtroopers broke into Jewish cemeteries and dug up and smashed the gravestones ... In Esslingen, brownshirts dressed in everyday clothes and armed with axes and sledgehammers broke into the Jewish orphanage at between midnight and one in the morning and destroyed everything they could, throwing books, religious insignia and anything else combustible onto a bonfire they lit in the yard. If they did not leave immediately, one stormtrooper told the weeping children, they too would be thrown onto the fire.¹⁴⁸

By the end of the night, about a hundred Jews lay dead, hundreds more were injured, at least 7,500 Jewish-owned shops (out of a total of roughly 9,000) had been destroyed, and 267 synagogues across Germany had been destroyed.¹⁴⁹ In addition, about 25,000 Jews were rounded up to be sent to concentration camps. By the end of 1938, almost one-third of Germany's 450,000 Jews had left the country. Already within a week of the shooting of vom Rath, Goebbels presented a talk on “the final solution of the Jewish question.”¹⁵⁰ On the following day, Reichsminister of Education Rust signed an order expelling all Jews from institutions of higher education in Germany.¹⁵¹ Subsequently, in April 1939, the Nazis confiscated all Jewish valuables, so that those who remained now lost the means to get out of Germany. Predictably, Nazi confiscations of Jewish property, including art works, often served to enrich leading

Nazis themselves.¹⁵² Nazi conquests of Poland, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium alone brought another 3.5 million Jews under Nazi rule. Special units accompanied the German army in Poland, made up of Security Service and Security Police (Gestapo and Kripo) personnel. These units beat up and murdered Jews and political elites whom they encountered in Poland, herding surviving Jews into urban ghettos.¹⁵³

For a while, in the early years of the Third Reich, the notion was entertained of moving Germany's Jews to Palestine, with the intention of seeing a Jewish state established there.¹⁵⁴ But the German Foreign Office was opposed to seeing a Jewish state in Palestine and, by the end of 1937, this notion seemed unlikely to see realization. After the defeat of France in spring 1940, the Nazis began to consider the option of deporting all of Europe's Jews to Madagascar. The cost of this undertaking was to be defrayed by the confiscation of Jewish property. As of June 1940, Hitler was said to favor the Madagascar plan, setting up a Jewish state, possibly under SS control. Soon, Adolf Eichmann (1906–62) and his staff at the Reich Security Head Office were drawing up plans to deport about a million Jews per year to Madagascar, over a four-year period.¹⁵⁵ But the British Royal Navy controlled the seas, and this plan had been premised on the assumption of a termination of hostilities with Great Britain (whether through a separate peace or, less likely, a British surrender). With Britain remaining in the war, the policy of deportation to Madagascar was abandoned. As early as 24 June 1940, when the Madagascar plan was still being discussed, Reinhard Heydrich (1904–42), head of the Security Service of the Gestapo, wrote to Joachim von Ribbentrop (1893–1946), the Third Reich's foreign minister, to suggest that, in any event, it would not be feasible to deport 3.25 million persons to Madagascar.¹⁵⁶ At this point, shipping Germany's Jews to Vichy France was also discussed.¹⁵⁷ In the weeks just prior to his speech in the Sportspalast on 30 January 1941, Hitler finally scrapped the Madagascar plan and tasked Heydrich to come up with a new plan to deport Germany's Jews; in other words, at the end of 1940, Hitler was not yet embracing genocide as his preferred "solution."¹⁵⁸

Some Nazis now favored converting the ghettos into labor camps, where Jews could assist the Nazi war effort. This option was in fact adopted as policy, but in conditions of inadequate rations, overcrowding,

deficient health care, substandard hygiene, and lack of heating fuel, disease spread in the ghettos and many Jews died.¹⁵⁹ Once the Germans invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, policy shifted decisively from a mixed program of murder, forced labor, and abortive notions about deportation, to a policy oriented primarily to the extermination of the Jews, the so-called final solution.

Extermination had always been a possibility, however. This was clear from Hitler's Reichstag speech in January 1939, when he promised that the outbreak of a world war would entail "the destruction of the Jews in Europe."¹⁶⁰ Later, on 31 July 1941, Hermann Göring, the head of the Gestapo, entrusted Heydrich with the task of making the organizational and technical preparations for the "complete solution of the Jewish question" within areas controlled by the Third Reich.¹⁶¹ Jews who could do so, fled; others, estimated at some 10,000, committed suicide. Some Jews organized resistance groups, arranged hideouts, prepared fake identity cards and ration checks, and assisted those being hunted by the Gestapo. During 1942–43, the mass murder of Jews would be stepped up. Initially, the Nazis were shooting the Jews, but this proved to be stressful for the soldiers doing the shooting. It was therefore decided to use the technology originally developed for liquidating the mentally ill; this meant the use of the poison gas Zyklon B, which was usually effective within twenty minutes. Hans-Adolf Jacobsen has estimated that, all told, the Nazis killed between 4,194,200 and 5,721,000 Jews.¹⁶² It is conventionally estimated that the Nazis liquidated at least 8 million persons and, as already noted, that roughly 6 million of these were Jews.

RELIGION AND THE GERMAN CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

Several of the most influential Nazis were self-professed "pagans," including Heinrich Himmler, Alfred Rosenberg, Reinhard Heydrich, and Martin Bormann. Conversely, both Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels were raised as Catholics, though Goebbels detached himself from the Church during his days at the university. Hitler never renounced his Catholicism but may have had more affinity with Protestantism. Neither Hitler nor Goebbels had any interest in promoting paganism. On the

contrary, Hitler ridiculed Himmler's declarations in favor of reviving polytheism and Goebbels shut down cultic sites which had been set up to serve as places for neopagan rituals.¹⁶³ They believed that Christianity would ultimately serve much better than paganism as a foundation for redesigning human nature.

In March 1933, Hitler gave a speech in which he reassured Germans that Christianity provided the foundation of "the moral and ethical life of our people."¹⁶⁴ But this was only a half-truth where the Nazis were concerned, because the German Christian Movement, which had been established under Nazi sponsorship, was designed to insinuate Nazi notions into Christianity and to strip away the Judaic contribution to Christianity, for example by deemphasizing and delegitimizing the Old Testament and by casting Jesus of Nazareth as an Aryan. Neopagan, "Nordic" traditions were insinuated into Protestant Christianity and an effort was undertaken to Nazify Christmas.¹⁶⁵

The German Christian Movement published a set of ten guidelines in 1932, in which its leaders identified themselves fully with the racialism being promulgated by the Nazis. This was not surprising, given that the initial impulse for this movement came from two pastors who were members of the Nazi Party.¹⁶⁶ Point 9 of these guidelines spelled out that the Jews should be seen to constitute a "serious threat" to the German nation and called for a ban on marriage between Germans and Jews, pointing to "the danger of racial fraud and bastardization."¹⁶⁷ In a much-discussed book published in 2003, Richard Steigmann-Gall stirred controversy by arguing that Hitler and most of the other high-ranking Nazis were convinced Christians.¹⁶⁸ Among other things, Steigmann-Gall argued that the Nazis wanted to strengthen institutional Protestantism, seeing in the Protestant Church a bulwark against Catholicism.¹⁶⁹ In taking this position, Steigmann-Gall, despite his protestations to the contrary, found himself in considerable agreement with Doris Bergen. The latter has emphasized that "the German Christians [i.e., the members of the regime's German Christian Movement] did not fit most standard theological criteria for Christians: that is, they rejected basic Christian teachings about the divinity and humanity of Jesus and renounced the canonicity of Christian scripture. Nevertheless, they remained self-consciously Christian, members of Christian Churches whose fellow Church people, inside and

outside Germany, accepted them as such.”¹⁷⁰ Nonetheless, the abolition of all denominational schools in 1939, with the removal of crucifixes and portraits of Luther from school walls in northern Germany in 1936 and the desecration of churches by members of the Hitler Youth serve to demonstrate that Christianity was to exist on terms set by the Nazi regime. There were doctrinal revisions as well, such as the fact that the SS journal *Schwarze Korps* declared the Christian notion of sin to be “intolerable to Nordic man.”¹⁷¹ What is essential to stress here is that the central value for the Nazis was racial hygiene, and what the Nazis demanded from the Christian Churches, and expected above all from the German Christian Movement, was support for their eugenics program and an endorsement of the importance of racial purity. Given the Catholic Church’s aforementioned protests against forced sterilization and euthanasia of those deemed by the Nazis to be “unworthy of life,” it is clear that the Catholic Church did not allow itself to become a partner to the Nazi regime, in spite of that Church’s distrust of liberalism and democracy.

What kind of Christianity would be viewed most favorably by the Nazi regime may be divined from an entry Goebbels made in his diary in December 1941: “A religion,” he wrote, “which proceeds from the basic premise that we must love our enemies, not kill [them], and turn the right cheek when we have been struck on the left one is not suited as a virile example for defending the Fatherland ... Clearly, this entire doctrine must somehow be replaced in the course of the [coming] decades.”¹⁷² Hitler agreed with Goebbels’s notion that there was “an insoluble opposition between the Christian and a Germanic-heroic world-view.”¹⁷³ Indeed, in January 1940, Hitler told Rosenberg that he looked forward to the time when he could smash the Churches “by force.”¹⁷⁴

WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Where Nazism could present itself as a natural ally for Christianity was in its emphasis on so-called traditional roles for women. At a time when many Europeans were concerned about declining birthrates, the Nazis urged women to take care of their husbands, and to raise children for

the Fatherland. Sex was for reproduction only, and sex for mutual enjoyment was frowned upon. The Nazis instituted a program of incentives and rewards for mothers. Parents were offered low-interest loans and mothers with three or more children under the age of ten received “honorary cards,” which allowed them to jump to the front of shopping queues and obtain reductions in their rent payments.¹⁷⁵ There were also medals for prolific mothers: a bronze Mother’s Cross for mothers of four or five children, a silver cross for giving birth to a sixth child, and a gold cross upon giving birth to the eighth child. The Nazis closed down birth control clinics but, inconsistently, did not prohibit the use of contraceptives until 1941, when their manufacture was halted.¹⁷⁶

The Nazis’ conservative-functional view of the family also affected young people, who were expected to practise obedience to authorities and to grow in patriotism. In the schools, young people studied race science, and learned that some races were “superior” and others “inferior.” But the highly regimented Hitler Youth, and the efforts to force *all* young people to join Nazi youth organizations, not to mention also the pervasive discipline and surveillance, all kindled rebellion and deviance among young people. Boys ages 10 to 14 were expected to join the Deutsches Jungvolk (German Young People), while girls of that age were expected to join the Jungmädel (Young Girls) organization. Boys between the ages of 14 and 18 were pressured to join the Hitler Jugend (Hitler Youth), while girls of that age group were pressured to join the Bund Deutscher Mädel (League of Young Girls).¹⁷⁷ Headquartered in the Saxon town of Plauen in 1926–31, the Hitler Youth grew slowly, by comparison with the Nazi Party. At the end of 1930, the organization registered only 14,000 members and even two years later, membership had reached just 55,000, at a time when the NSDAP recorded 920,000 members.¹⁷⁸ Fiercely antimaterialist and driven by an idealistic commitment to egalitarianism, the Hitler Youth was animated, at least in its early years, by a social revolutionary inspiration lacking in other Nazi organizations.¹⁷⁹ The Hitler Youth rejected traditional values, which they saw as supportive of the parliamentary democracy they despised, and became vocally contemptuous of all religion. The Hitler Youth had little respect for schools or learning, and the mastery of Latin, Greek, modern languages, mathematics, and literature suffered.¹⁸⁰ But the regime proved

unable to steer all adolescent boys into the Hitler Youth and, by 1942, a high-ranking figure in the Reich Youth leadership admitted that there were rising numbers of young people joining unofficial (i.e., illegal) youth groups.¹⁸¹ Three nonconformist groups among young people stand out: the Edelweiss Pirates, who appeared at the end of the 1930s; the White Rose, a student organization which, in June 1942, called for resistance to the Nazi terror;¹⁸² and the Swing Kids (Swing-Jugend).

The Edelweiss Pirates were grass-roots groups involving mainly persons between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. Among other things, they enjoyed singing songs about love and adventure, and rewriting the lyrics for traditional hiking songs or Hitler Youth movement songs to give them an anti-Nazi orientation. They also beat up Hitler Youth patrols and stuffed Allied propaganda leaflets (airdropped in the woods) into people's letter boxes. Thousands of young people were involved in these groups. The extent of the movement can be gauged from the fact that the Gestapo arrested more than 700 Edelweiss Pirates on a single day in December 1942; many of those arrested were hanged in public.¹⁸³

The White Rose (*Weißer Rose*) was a nonviolent group based in Munich, though with offshoots elsewhere, especially in Hamburg. The core members were five students at the University of Munich—Hans and Sophie Scholl, Alexander Schmorell, Christoph Probst, and Willi Graf—together with their philosophy professor, Kurt Huber. During the period June 1942–February 1943, the group produced six typed broadsheets, distributing about 100 copies of each of the first four; in these they reminded Germans of their moral obligations and called for resistance to the regime. The fifth broadsheet, with additions by Huber, was distributed in several thousand copies in Munich, Augsburg, Stuttgart, Frankfurt-am-Main, Vienna, Salzburg, and Linz. In February 1943, White Rose members became more daring and painted “Down with Hitler!” and “Hitler—Mass Murderer!” on various buildings in Munich, including at the main entrance to the university. But when Hans and Sophie Scholl began to scatter their sixth broadsheet in the university courtyard that same month, they were caught by the porter, who turned them over to the Gestapo. All six were arrested, tried, and convicted of treason. The Scholls and Probst were beheaded by guillotine on 22

February 1943; the remaining three were executed in the same way later that year.¹⁸⁴

Finally, there were the Swing Kids, who defied Nazi disapproval of swing and jazz, dancing the jitterbug and singing English lyrics. Largely a Hamburg phenomenon, the Swing Kids were the offspring of that city's professional and mercantile elite. As Richard Evans recounts, these young people

quickly began to flaunt their disdain [for the regime's strictures] in public, dressing up in the latest and most elegant British fashion clothes, sporting Union Jacks, carrying copies of *The Times* under their arms and greeting each other in English with phrases such as "Hallo, Old Swing Boy!" In clubs and bars, and at private parties, they danced to swing music and played jazz records banned by the regime. They did not intend to mount a political protest. But under the Third Reich, everything was political.¹⁸⁵

What kind of dancing met with Nazi approval? In a word, dances that were *völkisch*, which is to say, which reflected and expressed the German spirit. A report published in *The Times* of London, in 1933, albeit written tongue in cheek, captures the Nazi approach well enough:

A meeting of German dancing instructors, held under the enlightened guidance of a recognized Nazi dancing expert, has decided that the proscription of certain popular but un-German dances—to wit, the foxtrot, the tango, and the one-step—can no longer be delayed.

The decision marks another step in the campaign to eliminate the demoralization of lower cultures upon German life. In a laudable attempt to fill the big gap which will be left by the suppression of these popular dances, the experts have compiled a list of dances recognized as German, which is appropriately headed by the graceful "March Dance." A special substitute, the "change step," has been found for the foxtrot, and the list, which is forced to rely mainly on variations of the waltz, is brought to a breathless conclusion with the galop.¹⁸⁶

Why should we care about Nazi policy vis-à-vis dance? Because a regime that regulates whom you may marry, the content of religious belief, and even the songs you may sing and the music to which you may dance does not recognize any boundary between the public and the private: in essence, in the Nazi view, there were no such things as private concerns or private interests!

CULTURAL POLICY

Nazi cultural policy was conditioned by the emphasis on race already discussed above, as well as by other interests. These included a glorification of peasant life and accompanying rejection of urban culture as decadent, a desire to associate the Nazi present with a creatively imagined and idealized construct of medieval Germany (the Holy Roman Empire of the German People), a wistful but also manipulative orientation toward the nineteenth century, emphasizing its Romanticism in art, architecture, music, and literature, and a desire to put cultural products, whatever they may be, to political uses. Yet Nazi policies in the cultural sector were simultaneously both totalitarian and polycentric, with power struggles not only between Goebbels and Rosenberg over the direction and management of cultural policy, but also at the local and regional levels, and both within and outside government.¹⁸⁷

The Nazis' use of films to promote their ideology is perhaps the best-known facet of their cultural policy. Less well known, however, is the fact that, of the 1,097 feature films produced in the Third Reich between 1933 and 1945, the regime classified only 229 of these as overtly propagandistic; by contrast, 50 percent of the total consisted of love stories or comedies, and another 25 percent of crime thrillers, musicals, or dramatic films.¹⁸⁸ But even films without overt political content could insinuate useful messages in subtle ways. The Nazis had promised to re-enchant "the world, recapturing the sense of wonder, wholeness, and authenticity previously attained through religion and shattered by modernity" and to give Germans "a sense of belonging."¹⁸⁹ Films could serve this function, while also allowing Germans to escape from reality to a cinematic world where escapist fantasy was frequently on offer.

The Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda¹⁹⁰ had already been established when a Reich Film Chamber was established, in July 1933, to oversee films, regulating their funding and ensuring the removal of Jews from the film industry. Films were also routinely sent to the censorship office for approval, before they could be released. But Goebbels, as minister of propaganda, was granted special powers, under an amendment to the law on cinema, passed on 28 June 1935, which allowed him to ban any film he judged to be contrary to the public interest, bypassing the censorship office.¹⁹¹

Goebbels expanded the regulation of cultural life more generally, forming the Reich Culture Chamber (RKK)¹⁹². The Reich Film Chamber now figured as one of seven units operating under the organizational umbrella of the RKK, the others having responsibility to oversee literature, theater, fine arts, the press, radio, and music. Goebbels's agency for the regulation of music was the Reich Music Chamber.¹⁹³ But Alfred Rosenberg had set up his own agency, the National Socialist Cultural Community, and had his own priorities in the musical sector. Among other things, Rosenberg wanted to purge the religious works of Bach, Handel, Mozart, and Beethoven of "Jehovah's songs," while Goebbels shot back that Rosenberg's thinking, if carried out in practice, would amount to "a betrayal of German history."¹⁹⁴ The propaganda minister therefore issued a directive, in 1934, forbidding any (further) alteration of Handel's librettos. But already the next year, Fritz Stein, director of the Berlin Hochschule für Musik, obviously operating with Rosenberg's blessing, presented a new version of Handel's *Occasional Oratorio*, in which he had allowed himself to make some emendations—in open defiance of Goebbels. In 1939, Hermann Stephani, director of music at Marburg University, went even further and completely recast Handel's *Judas Maccabeus* as a panegyric to a twentieth-century hero, under the title, *Der Feldherr* (the Field Marshal); the implicit reference was to Hitler himself.¹⁹⁵ The following year, Goebbels set up the Reich Office for Musical Revision¹⁹⁶ as an adjunct to the Ministry of Propaganda, for the purpose of supervising the revision of opera and operetta librettos. Handel's *Jephtha* was now recast as *Das Opfer* (The Sacrifice) in 1941, while *Judas Maccabeus* reemerged in a second reworking under the title *Wilhelm von Nassauen*.

In their drive to purge all traces of Jewish contributions to musical culture, the Nazis turned to the works of Felix Mendelssohn (1809–47), whose legacy embraces four symphonies, a concert overture (*The Hebrides*), and incidental music to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which includes the famous wedding march still used in marriage ceremonies in much of the Western world. Although born into a prominent Jewish family, Mendelssohn was raised without any religion until age seven, when he was baptised as a Reformed Christian; but, for the Nazis, Mendelssohn was not a Christian, but a Jew. The Nazis were intent on suppressing all of Mendelssohn's music, including his aforementioned incidental music. To this end, they sent out a call to qualified composers throughout the country to provide suitable music that might be used in place of the popular music penned by Mendelssohn. Altogether, the Nazis sponsored forty-four attempts to write new music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; among those who responded to the call was Carl Orff (1895–1982), best known for his oratorio, *Carmina Burana*. By contrast, Richard Strauss (1864–1949), composer of the Romantic opera, *Der Rosenkavalier*, refused to compose new music for the Shakespeare play, provoking threats that his own music would be boycotted.¹⁹⁷

Music which the Nazis considered to be either Jewish or “decadent” (or, for that matter, both) was banned. In September 1935, Goebbels and his staff finalized a list of 108 composers, whose work was not to be performed, usually because the composers were Jewish or classified by the Nazis as Jewish, but also sometimes because of the given composer's political or suspected political intentions.¹⁹⁸ Among the composers whose works were banned in the Third Reich were Gustav Mahler (1860–1911), Erich Korngold (1897–1957), Arnold Schönberg (1874–1951), and Kurt Weill (1900–50), along with Paul Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*.¹⁹⁹ But the Nazis did not stop there, but also banned books by Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, Ernst Bloch, Albert Einstein, Arthur Schnitzler, and the Mann brothers (Thomas and Heinrich), as well as some foreign authors, such as Ernest Hemingway, Henrik Ibsen, and Anton Chekhov.²⁰⁰ In art, the Nazis reviled abstract art, and even staged an exhibition of “degenerate art,” which opened in Munich on 19 July 1937, displaying the paintings of Ernst Barlach, Willi Baumeister, Max Beckmann, Georges Braque, Max Ernst, Franz Marc, Lovis Corinth, Marc Chagall, Paul

Klee, Otto Dix, Lyonel Feininger, George Grosz, Erich Heckel, Karl Hofer, Ludwig Kirchner, Oskar Kokoschka, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Max Liebermann, August Macke, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Otto Mueller, Edvard Munch, Ernst Wilhelm Nay, Emile Nolde, Max Pechstein, Pablo Picasso, Oskar Schlemmer, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, and Wassily Kandinsky, among others, for visitors to scorn.²⁰¹ The day before the *Exhibition of Degenerate Art* opened, an exhibition of *Great German Art* opened, likewise in Munich. But to the Nazis' dismay, there was considerably less interest among the public in the stiff forms in the officially approved art than in the supposedly "degenerate" art. Indeed, the *Exhibition of Degenerate Art* ran for some four years, touring thirteen cities. In spite of this exhibition, the polycentrism in the Nazi cultural sector asserted itself and, in fact, modernist art "was produced under the official patronage of Adolf Hitler and the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* [the German Armed Forces High Command]."²⁰² Among a collection of 9,250 Nazi-era works of art assembled by the U.S. Army in the years 1946–47 (in the course of looting), are Helga Tieman's oil painting *Abschied* (1944), set in an underground railway station and conveying a "more than mildly subversive, anti-war message"; Ernst Widmann's *Karst zwischen Triest und Fiume* (undated), an example of neo-Expressionism; an abstract landscape by Gottfried Meyer, considered an example of post-Impressionism; and Karl Busch's *Flüchtlinge in Russland* (Refugees in Russia, no date), which captures "the vast scale of human suffering and despair caused by the German invasion of the Soviet Union."²⁰³ Moreover, compared with civilian artists on the home front, artists embedded in Wehrmacht units enjoyed greater freedom in portraying what they witnessed in the war zone.²⁰⁴

The regime disdained not only jazz, but also the fox trot, the shimmy, and the rumba, all of which were dismissed as "Negertänze."²⁰⁵ However, after largely counterproductive efforts to shut down the swing subculture in Hamburg and other cities, the Nazis eventually decided to coopt the genre and put together an official swing and jazz band called "Charlie and His Orchestra" to sing pro-German propaganda to a swing beat, and cut records to be distributed in Allied countries. The band was not particularly successful and, to the Nazis' chagrin, many of the band's members were not even German.²⁰⁶

There was, of course, classical music, which Hitler and his clique felt expressed the German spirit best. In addition to Richard Wagner (1813–83) and Ludwig von Beethoven (1770–1827), the Austrian composer Anton Bruckner (1824–96) was also elevated to the pantheon of great German composers—or, more literally, to the neoclassical Valhalla Temple which had been built between 1830 and 1842 by King Ludwig I of Bavaria in the vicinity of Regensburg, overlooking the Danube River, to house busts and commemorative plaques of almost 200 Germans of accomplishment. Hitler himself attended the dedication ceremony for Bruckner's bust on 6 June 1937²⁰⁷ and, beginning around 1941, began to think of converting the Abbey of St. Florian in Linz into a Bruckner Foundation. So highly did Hitler think of Bruckner's music that, before each of his addresses on cultural themes at Nuremberg, a movement from one of Bruckner's symphonies would be played. Later, in April 1945, after German radio announced Hitler's death, the adagio of Bruckner's *Symphony No. 7* was played, as requested by the Führer.²⁰⁸

Some composers and musicians (such as Schönberg) left Germany as soon as they could. Others decided to serve the regime openly (such as composer Hans Pfitzner, an ardent anti-Semite,²⁰⁹ and violinist and conductor Gustav Havemann, who supported the Nazis out of opportunism but later put his career at risk by defending Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*²¹⁰). Still others (such as Orff) tried to survive in the repressive atmosphere without compromising their artistic integrity. Orff did sunder contacts with former friends of Jewish origin, but his best known works (aside from *Carmina Burana*, one may also mention *Catulli Carmina*) were characterized by a musical style that was highly rhythmic and even primitive, albeit in a sophisticated way, constituting, as one writer put it, "a kind of return to musical innocence that stands at the opposite pole from Romanticism, post-Romanticism, neo-Romanticism, and Impressionism"²¹¹—in other words, at the opposite pole from precisely the kind of music the Nazis liked the most. Indeed, when his *Carmina Burana* was first premiered in 1937, the prominent Nazi musicologist Hans Gerigk, who had played a role in bringing about Hindemith's downfall, panned the work.²¹² But the overwhelming popularity of the work both with the general public and with many Nazis themselves overcame this initial damnation and assured Orff of acceptance by the regime and its

cultural agencies. Still, Goebbels had some reservations and commented, “his *Carmina Burana* exhibits exquisite beauty, and if we could get him to do something about his lyrics, his music would certainly be very promising.”²¹³ Two decades after the end of World War II, the Israeli National Opera staged a performance of Orff’s *Carmina Burana*, and advised its audience that Orff had been “an active resistance fighter” in Nazi times.²¹⁴

By contrast, Richard Strauss’s relationship with the Nazis has been described as “complex” and “intricate,”²¹⁵ although all observers concede that Strauss’s priority was music, not politics.²¹⁶ But Strauss was not averse to harnessing political force in the interests of music he favored, and hence, “under any regime, and the more powerful and influential he became himself, in his heart of hearts he wanted the abhorred musical genres censored so as not to endanger the serious works of his peers, and especially his own.”²¹⁷ Consistently, he at first endeavored to use the ceremonial post of president of Goebbels’s Reich Music Chamber to which the Nazis had elevated him without consulting him and, for that matter, against his will, in order to promote good music.²¹⁸ But Strauss either did not understand that there was a bargain he needed to keep, or preferred to behave as if there was no bargain; in any event, he continued to associate with Jews, despite the Nazis’ overt hostility toward the latter, and frequently disregarded official orders. It was in response to these infractions that the regime forced him to relinquish his honorific position. He had taken the precaution of securing special permission from the Führer himself to collaborate with Stefan Zweig, a half-Jew, on an opera, *Die schweigsame Frau* (The Silent Woman), but chose to interpret this as a sign that he could do as he pleased. Thus, already in 1934, he attended a music festival in open defiance of an explicit order to the contrary, and it was at this time too that he refused to offer to compose music for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Hitler and Goebbels were angered and, in response, boycotted the premiere of *Die schweigsame Frau*. The opera was shortly thereafter banned throughout Germany and, for a one-year period, all of Strauss’s other works, except *Der Rosenkavalier*, were officially boycotted.²¹⁹ Far from being ready to cave in, however, Strauss, driven by pacifist convictions, went to work on an opera which would convey an explicitly pacifist message. As his librettist he worked

with Joseph Gregor. This new opera, *Friedenstag* (Day of Peace), was nominally set at the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648 and condemned the horrors of war, even criticizing "excessive heroism."²²⁰ Probably because the music was fully Romantic, even Wagnerian, with the text taking up German themes, the Nazis allowed the work to be premiered in the midst of war. But the text screams out an antiwar message. The following extracts make the point:

I have seen the enemy ... they are men just like us,
They suffer from want, out there in their trenches, exactly as we do—
When they tread, they groan as we do –
And when they pray, they also beseech to God!

I hate battle and war!²²¹

The Nazis' cultural policy was all-embracing, even if not always centrally controlled. It extended to painting and architecture, with Hitler dictating a preference for nineteenth-century Romanticism in art and neoclassical construction in architecture,²²² to folklore, where Nazi propagandists promoted a cult of the peasantry with images evocative of the late nineteenth-century folk movement,²²³ to archeology, where the emphasis was placed on demonstrating that Nordic peoples were superior to all others. Furthermore, as Staatsminister Hans Schemm put it, in 1934, "the Classical civilizations of Greece and Rome ... emerged from the blood and spirit of the Nordic races and carried their cultures south, there to further expand and develop them."²²⁴ Even the historical preservation and restoration of historic palaces and castles were put to political use, albeit sometimes with more invention than authenticity; in this regard, the work on the Castle of Trifels may serve to illustrate the point. The castle, most likely originally built in the eleventh century and later converted into an imperial castle, had, by the twentieth century, decayed to the point where "it was impossible to determine the castle's medieval appearance."²²⁵ That did not deter its would-be restoration engineers, who proceeded to fashion a new castle, to fit the Third Reich's concept of what a medieval castle should look like. Rudolf Esterer, a professional architect who had been commissioned to oversee the work on

Trifels, explained at the time that what he had in mind was “something particular that has hardly anything to do with the concept of preservation in the conventional sense ... The question, whether and to what extent art historical and preservationist demands can be fulfilled, pales greatly in comparison to the living, cultural intentions pursued here.”²²⁶

THE WAR YEARS TO JULY 1943

Beginning in 1933, Germany had been rearming on a massive scale. The German Navy had been augmented by two battleships, two armoured cruisers, seventeen destroyers, and forty-seven submarines, and was completing the construction of two massive, 35,000-ton battleships, four cruisers, an aircraft carrier, five additional destroyers, and seven additional submarines. The German Luftwaffe boasted 260,000 men, organised into twenty-one squadrons and armed with some 300 antiaircraft batteries.²²⁷ By the summer of 1939, the Luftwaffe had at its disposal 1,191 bombers, 361 dive bombers, and 1,219 fighter aircraft. The army had between 700,000 and 800,000 ground troops at its disposal at the start of the war, together with 6,000 pieces of artillery and mortars, and nearly 1,500 10-ton Panzer I tanks. These were later replaced by the Panzer II, and, by 1940–42, the 22-ton third generation Panzer III tanks were operational.²²⁸ This was a formidable force, and it would be augmented and refined in the course of the war.

From September 1939 until December 1941, the Nazi war machine seemed to be unstoppable. After annexing the western half of Poland in September 1939, the Nazi Einsatzgruppen “rounded up and shot or imprisoned thousands of teachers, intellectuals, officers, and priests. One thousand seven hundred Polish priests were sent to Dachau; half of them died before the end of the war.”²²⁹ After sweeping into Poland, the Wehrmacht occupied Denmark on 9 April 1940, pushing northward and subduing Norway by June 1940.²³⁰ The German press was full of allegations to the effect that Great Britain had been threatening the independence of the Scandinavian countries and, after the Wehrmacht had entered Denmark and Norway, *Völkischer Beobachter* ran a story with the headline “Germany saves Scandinavia: Norway and Denmark

taken under the protection of the Reich.”²³¹ Norway would provide bases for German submarines and landing strips for German aircraft, and would secure shipments of iron ore to the Reich. Even before the conquest of Norway was complete, Germany attacked the Low Countries—The Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxemburg—with a massive force of 136 divisions, 2,580 tanks, 3,824 aircraft, and more than 7,000 pieces of artillery.²³² The Low Countries were quickly occupied and the Wehrmacht continued into France on 5 June. German troops entered Paris on 14 June 1940; eight days later, a new French government, formed by Marshal Henri Pétain, a military hero in World War I, agreed to an armistice, under which Germany would occupy the northern two-thirds of France (including Paris). The southern third was placed under the administration of a collaborationist French government headed by Pétain himself, with its seat in Vichy.

By February 1941, the Afrika Corps commanded by General Erwin Rommel (1891–1944) was hurtling across North Africa in the direction of Egypt. In early April 1941, Axis forces overran Yugoslavia and partitioned it, setting up collaborationist governments in Zagreb and Belgrade. Italian forces had invaded Greece at the end of October 1940, but had become bogged down, tallying up casualties of 13,755 dead, 50,784 injured, 25,067 dispersed, and more than 52,000 sick.²³³ Coming to Mussolini’s rescue, the Wehrmacht continued southward into Greece and, by the end of April, had established control of that country as well. At this point, the Third Reich directly occupied Austria, Bohemia, Denmark, Norway, Greece, parts of Yugoslavia, and much of Poland and France, had installed collaborationist governments in Vichy France, Slovakia, the Independent State of Croatia (which included Bosnia-Herzegovina), and Serbia, and enjoyed friendly relations with the governments of Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Sweden. In addition, Germany’s ally Italy was occupying an area of southeastern France, the southern portion of Slovenia, Albania and Kosovo, Libya, and parts of Dalmatia and Croatia, in addition to Abyssinia and a portion of Greece. Germany had failed to conquer Britain, losing 1,103 aircraft in the effort (as against British losses of 642 aircraft).²³⁴

As early as 29 September 1939, Hitler had decided that all non-Germans living in the western part of Poland, which the Third Reich had

occupied by them, would be resettled on lands to the east; their homes would be confiscated and made available to Germans willing to move there. Hitler's idea at that point in time, thus, was that the three million Jews inhabiting German-occupied Poland could be expelled to Soviet-occupied Poland; in fact, this recourse had been specifically agreed in a secret clause in the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939.²³⁵ Reinhard Heydrich, Himmler's deputy in the SS, who had initial responsibility to organize the concentration camps, began setting up sealed ghettos to which not only Jews but also other "undesirables" could be sent. Lublin was the first city designated as a destination for Jews, and by early 1941 there were fifty-one slave labor camps operating in the area of Lublin. Odillo Globocnik, a member of the Nazi party since 1931 who had helped to facilitate the Nazi occupation of Austria in March 1938, was named SS police leader in Lublin and took the lead in setting up the extermination camps at Belzec, Majdanek, Treblinka, and Sobibör, as well as a string of slave-labor camps.²³⁶

The Warsaw ghetto, set up on 16 October 1940, was the largest ghetto established by the Nazis; it was sealed by a brick wall by 16 November, with some 380,000 Jews squeezed into an area comprising just 2.4 percent of Warsaw. From July through September 1942, about 300,000 of these Jews would be deported to the Treblinka extermination camp.²³⁷ Another ghetto was set up for the 230,000 Jews living in Łódź; they were allocated just 4.3 square kilometers, sealed by 1 May 1940. The Jews of Łódź were turned into slave laborers, working twelve-hour shifts, making electrical equipment, army uniforms, and other items.

There were different opinions among the Nazis at the time about what to do with the Jews, which is one of the reasons why policies were inconsistent during the years until sometime in 1941. Himmler even declared, in May 1940, that the "physical extermination of all Jews" was "impossible" and "contrary to German nature."²³⁸ As one scholar has suggested, "it is unlikely [that] there was any plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe before, at the very earliest, the spring of 1941."²³⁹

Initially, Hitler had hoped that, following the German conquest of France, the British would agree to a peace treaty and cease hostilities against the Third Reich. But by early July 1940, Hitler developed a new strategy, concluding that, if the Wehrmacht could defeat the Soviet

Union, then Britain and the United States would allow the Reich to do as it wished on the continent.²⁴⁰ Leading figures in the Wehrmacht High Command registered their opposition to this decision and there were also warnings of the danger of a two-front war.²⁴¹ But Hitler, who had in any case dreamed of conquering Lebensraum in Russia, proceeded with his plans for Operation Barbarossa, as the invasion of the Soviet Union was to be called. Originally scheduled for April 1941, the invasion was delayed when, in the wake of an ambiguous coup in Belgrade,²⁴² Hitler decided to send a large invasion force into Yugoslavia and carve the country into segments. Local resistance not only delayed the inception of Operation Barbarossa but also required that Berlin station troops in Croatia and Serbia in order to support the local collaborationist regimes.

After this delay, on 22 June 1941, the Wehrmacht, supported by forces from Finland and Romania,²⁴³ attacked the Soviet Union. Some 3.3 million Axis troops participated in the invasion, with Army Group North heading toward Leningrad (present-day St. Petersburg), Army Group Center pushing toward Moscow, and Army Group South striking into the Ukrainian breadbasket in the direction of Kiev. In terms of numbers of tanks, mortars, and combat aircraft, the Soviet side enjoyed clear superiority (see Table 4.1).

TABLE 4.1
Initial Opposing Forces on 22 June 1941

	German	Soviet
Divisions	100	132
Personnel	2,510,000	1,950,448
Tanks	3,648	8,695
Guns and mortars	26,095	30,809
Combat aircraft	2,846	7,224

Source: Anders Frankson, "Summer 1941,"
Journal of Slavic Military Studies, vol. 13, no. 3 (September 2000), 133.

But the numbers are misleading, since 63 percent of Soviet tanks were nonoperational as of June 1941, and not all of the aircraft were opera-

tional.²⁴⁴ Axis forces quickly occupied a huge swathe of land, including the Baltic states, Belorussia, much of Ukraine, and part of western Russia. But the German troops, even where initially welcomed as liberators from Stalin's harsh rule, proved to be harsher than Stalin's men had been. The Soviet people therefore rallied around the Soviet state, sabotaging dams, railroads, and factories lying in the Germans' path, and setting fire to crops. As Adam Tooze records, "By the end of July 1941, all three Germany army groups had reached the feasible limit of their supply system and had halted their advance. The Red Army, though it had suffered devastating casualties, had not been destroyed. It was still fighting and inflicting serious losses" on the Wehrmacht.²⁴⁵ The Germans captured Kiev in early autumn, but were unable to take either Leningrad or Moscow. Hitler had naïvely assumed that the Soviet Union could be conquered within four months and, in a reckless decision, had sent the Wehrmacht into Soviet territory without winter gear.²⁴⁶ Both the Germans and the Soviets had suffered heavy losses, and a Soviet counteroffensive, launched in December 1941, pushed the Wehrmacht back about 100 miles (160 kilometers) from Moscow. Meanwhile, the Soviets stepped up production of the highly mobile T-34 tank with its 76 mm long-barreled gun, later refitted with a more powerful 85 mm barrel.²⁴⁷ Altogether, more than 52,000 T-34 tanks were produced and the T-34 may be counted as one of a number of factors that turned the tide against the Wehrmacht on the eastern front.

In the spring of 1942, the Germans once more took the offensive, overrunning the Crimean peninsula and driving toward the oil fields of the Caucasus. Hitler now gave General Friedrich von Paulus the fateful order to capture Stalingrad (present-day Volgograd). The battle for Stalingrad began in late August 1942 and dragged on for five months, with hand-to-hand combat in the middle of the city. Since winter was rapidly approaching, von Paulus asked Hitler to abort the operation and authorise a withdrawal. Hitler refused. As von Paulus dug in, Soviet troops counterattacked in mid-November, trapping the German army within a week. Short of food and freezing, the last remnants of von Paulus's army surrendered on 2 February 1943. By that point, 99 percent of the city lay in ruins; more than 41,000 homes together with 300 factories had been destroyed. The casualty figures at Stalingrad are shocking.

According to one estimate, the Soviets lost 750,000 persons at Stalingrad, while German dead came to about 400,000.²⁴⁸ The Battle of Stalingrad turned the tide of war. Any lingering uncertainties concerning which side had the upper hand now were dispelled the following July when, in a huge battle fought on the southern head of the Kursk salient, more than 300 German tanks were destroyed in a single day.²⁴⁹

TOWARD THE FINAL SOLUTION

During the war years, as Anna Rosmus writes, “almost ten million foreign women and men, mostly from Poland and the Soviet Union, were deported to do forced labor in the German Reich.”²⁵⁰ When these non-German women became pregnant, the Nazis subjected them to forced abortions, costing the lives of an estimated 50,000 unborn and newborn babies. Adding the number of babies taken from their mothers after birth and allowed to die results in an even higher estimate of lives lost.²⁵¹ But the fate of the Jews was the harshest. As the Wehrmacht pushed into the Soviet Union, Nazi policy toward the Jews took a decisive turn toward extermination.²⁵²

Even as late as June 1941, the Nazi leadership still thought in terms of forced resettlement as the principal measure to be applied to remove Jews from Europe. It was in the course of July–August 1941—as a result of a combination of factors including established pre-Nazi prejudices, Nazi ideological propaganda, the Nazi project of establishing a purely German Lebensraum in the east, and an elastic reading at the front of Berlin’s expectations—that the Wehrmacht and special forces started killing civilians, both Jewish and non-Jewish, on a daily basis.²⁵³ These victims were either shot on the spot in their towns and villages or stripped naked, forced to dig their own graves, and then shot into their graves. By the end of 1941, the Nazis had murdered between 500,000 and 800,000 Jews, including women and children, on the eastern front.²⁵⁴ The desire to expand the dominion of German settlement was crucial. Yet Hitler certainly sanctioned, encouraged, and promoted the killing and, in fact, told Göring, Alfred Rosenberg, Hans Lammers, Martin Bormann, and Wilhelm Keitel on 16 July 1941 that “all necessary measures”—which

would include shootings—should be accelerated in order to secure German control of the newly conquered lands; Hitler also promised his cohorts that “we will never leave these areas again.”²⁵⁵ In response to a comment from Rosenberg, who preferred a lenient treatment of Ukrainians and other non-Russians, in order to bring them into alliance with Germany against Russia and Bolshevism, Hitler insisted on a more radical approach, saying that “the vast area must be pacified as quickly as possible; this will happen best by shooting anyone who even looks sideways at us.”²⁵⁶ The war on the eastern front, thus, became a war of extermination.

In the summer of 1941, curious onlookers would come out to watch the mass executions of Jews, in what Browning has called “execution tourism.” Tourism or not, many of these onlookers were horrified by what they were witnessing.²⁵⁷ In mid-September 1941, with Hitler’s assent, the deportation of German Jews en masse to eastern territories got underway. By October, Jews classified as “unfit for labor” were being executed in the western regions of Ukraine and Belorussia, as well as in Wartheland.²⁵⁸ Even now, however, the plan of action was not clear to all Nazi functionaries. Thus, Hinrich [*sic*] Lohse, the Reich commissar for the Ostland, who had intervened to prevent Einsatzkommando 2 from killing Jews in Liepaja (Latvia), was uncertain, as late as 15 November 1941, as to what the policy vis-à-vis the Jews was—or perhaps could not believe his eyes and ears—and contacted Berlin to ask if there was “a directive to liquidate all Jews in the East.”²⁵⁹ Rosenberg gave an answer to this question three days later, telling a press conference that “the ‘Jewish Question’ could only be solved by the ‘biological extermination of all the Jews in Europe.’”²⁶⁰ All along, Hitler had been of two minds about the Jews—to deport them or to liquidate them. Then, on 12 December 1941, five days after declaring war on the United States, Hitler addressed his Reichsleiter and Gauleiter at the Chancellery and referred to his “prophecy” that the war would bring about the complete destruction of European Jewry. On hearing Hitler’s speech, Goebbels entered the following note in his diary: “With regard to the Jewish Question, the Führer is determined to make a clear sweep of it ... The world war is here. The annihilation of Jewry must be the necessary consequence.”²⁶¹

The ill-famed Wannsee Conference held on 20 January 1942 may be seen, thus, in this context: it was intended to settle such disputes as existed between party and state functionaries concerning the “Jewish Question” and to clarify the policy which had emerged for any who might still be uncertain.²⁶² Specifically, Reinhard Heydrich told those assembled at Wannsee that the plan to resettle Jews out of Europe was no longer feasible, if it had ever been, and that the Final Solution adopted by the regime was to exterminate all 10–11 million Jews residing in Europe. This number included not only those Jews living in areas already controlled or occupied by the Nazis but also some 330,000 Jews living in England as well as Jews living in neutral Spain, Portugal, and Switzerland.²⁶³ Those fit enough to work were to be worked to death at slave-labor camps, whereas those not fit enough to work would be sent directly to extermination camps. In accord with this plan, pressure was placed on collaborationist regimes in Hitler’s empire to send Jews to German authorities who would then send them to the camps. The most important extermination camps were Chelmno, Belzec, Majdanek, Sobibör, Treblinka, and Auschwitz-Birkenau. At Treblinka alone between 800,000 and 1.3 million Jews were killed; at Majdanek, the figure was more than 200,000; according to Yehuda Bauer, some 1.35 million people were exterminated at Auschwitz, although there are also higher estimates.²⁶⁴ Incarcerated Jews revolted in many camps, with women playing a prominent role in these revolts, including at Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibör, and Chelmno, but without success. As the tide of war turned against the Third Reich, orders went out to accelerate the killing of Jews and to destroy all evidence of the genocide. However, as Mark Mazower notes, mass murder on such a huge scale simply could not be covered up.²⁶⁵

THE TIDE TURNS

In a secret plan directed by SS major Bernhard Krüger, the Germans were using inmates at concentration camps at Sachsenhausen, Auschwitz, and elsewhere to counterfeit British currency, in order to destabilize the British economy. The Bank of England learned of this plan as early as 1939, and took measures to protect the stability of the pound.²⁶⁶ Mean-

while, the Royal Air Force began saturation bombing of German cities in 1942. Some 900 bombers struck Cologne on 30 May 1942 in the first such raid. The U.S. Air Force joined the war against Germany the same year. Dresden would be subjected to a devastating bombardment by British and American aircraft during the night of 13/14 February 1945, leaving more than 35,000 persons dead and causing massive destruction of the city's infrastructure.²⁶⁷ By the end of the war, Germany's cities, factories, refineries, and railroads had been reduced to ruins. In July 1943, Allied forces invaded Sicily; less than two months later, Italy surrendered to the Allies. As noted in the previous chapter, Mussolini survived for a while longer (until April 1945) as the figurehead of a German puppet government in the north of Italy. On 6 June 1944, Allied troops landed at Normandy, France. In the interim, the Germans had also suffered significant losses of submarines, resulting in a halt of the German Atlantic campaign.

On the eastern front, Soviet troops enjoyed a significant numerical advantage over their German opponents by 1943 and, with supplies being delivered from the United States and Britain as well as increased domestic production of war materiel, the Red Army pushed the Germans back. In January 1944, the Soviets succeeded in lifting the siege of Leningrad, after about a million of the city's inhabitants had died (mostly from starvation or lack of heat). Five months later, following on the Normandy invasion, Soviet forces attacked along a 450-mile (720-kilometer) front and, in June 1944, set up a communist-led Polish government in Lublin. Berlin responded by dramatically increasing the production of military aircraft, boosting it from 1,323 produced in February 1944 to 3,538 in September of that year; of the latter figure, nearly 2,900 were fighter aircraft.²⁶⁸

Ever since the Sudeten crisis of 1938, a group of high-ranking officers in the Wehrmacht's High Command had been discussing a series of plans to assassinate Hitler. For various reasons, the conspirators had had to cancel one after another plan until 20 July 1944 when Colonel Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, acting on behalf of this group, placed a bomb next to Hitler, in hopes of taking Germany out of the war and negotiating peace. The plot failed and Hitler had the conspirators

rounded up and executed.²⁶⁹ Among those executed were Stauffenberg and, after a delay, Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

As Soviet armies advanced into the Balkan peninsula, both Romania and Bulgaria switched sides, joining the Allies by September 1944. The Germans made a last desperate effort to counter the Allies on the western front, launching a counteroffensive on 16 December 1944, with the 6th Panzer Army carrying the main thrust in the north, the 5th Panzer Army advancing in the center, and the 7th Panzer Army pushing in the south. Only the 5th Panzer Army was able to dent Allied lines, and by 3 January 1945 the Allies were once more on the offensive.²⁷⁰ By April 1945, the Red Army had encircled Berlin and began to close in. On 30 April, Hitler reportedly committed suicide;²⁷¹ a week later Germany surrendered unconditionally. According to Walter Rauscher, the war that Hitler started cost some 50–55 million lives, counting both combatants and civilians.²⁷²

THE DISORGANIZED STATE—DRAWING UP THE BALANCE SHEET

Contrary to assessments in some early historiography, the Nazi state was not monolithic. On the contrary, most scholars now view the Third Reich as having been “a polycracy of competing satrapies with which the central government had to seek some *modus vivendi*.”²⁷³ Without minimizing Hitler’s charismatic power, Hitler did not attempt to decide every issue or resolve every dispute between the various Nazi agencies and officials; indeed, he often preferred to remain neutral and leave it to his Gauleiter to sort things out.²⁷⁴ Some pre-1933 German institutions continued to function in the Third Reich, and even to enjoy one or another degree of autonomy; moreover, it was not until February 1938 that every ministry was headed by a Nazi. But shadow bureaux were sometimes set up to duplicate (and overrule) the work of established governmental institutions. In fact, Hitler never fully clarified what he thought the relationship between party and the state should be. There was a Department for Affairs of State, headed by Martin Bormann (1900–45?), which was supposed to assure the party’s domination of the governmental apparatus. But, in practice, the autonomy of traditional

power blocs, though increasingly limited, especially after 1943, was never entirely destroyed. There were also rivalries among various Nazi leaders and institutions. What held the system together was Hitler, who ruled by playing off one power bloc against another, and through his control of the Gestapo and the Security Service.

Few regimes in history have caused as much suffering as the Third Reich. Indeed, in quantitative terms, only Stalin's Russia is in the same category. No other regime in history has so systematically used measures of sterilization and extermination as part of a eugenics-inspired program of population modification. On the other hand, the Nazi endeavour to control art, music, theatre, and attire, like the leadership cult, was not unique and one can easily name other systems that have tried to control one or more of these spheres. And yet, for all of the evil that the Third Reich perpetrated and for all of its sheer perversity, it still finds admirers here and there—in the United States, in Russia, indeed in many countries in Europe. Why is this so? Several answers suggest themselves. First, some people are driven by a need to rebel and the embrace of evil is the most extreme form of rebellion. Second the propaganda of the Third Reich projected strength and power, and some people are drawn to power. Third, some people are racists and find the racism of the Third Reich, and even its programs of mass extermination, appealing. And fourth, for those craving extreme discipline and regimentation, neo-Nazism seems to offer the prospect of satisfaction.

FASCISM VERSUS NAZISM

Taking stock of the historical record of these regimes, it seems clear to me that, as has been argued by Roger Griffin among others mentioned in the previous chapter, Italian Fascism and German Nazism were political embodiments of a common fascist genre because they both were inspired by a palingenetic vision, strove for political, social, cultural, and military rebirth through a totalitarian revolution under a charismatic leader, were hostile to liberal democracy, and sought to construct an alternative modernity, while turning the nation into a great imperial power. That does not mean, however, that they were identical. There

were, in fact, some salient differences, including the greater importance of race and biological racism in the Third Reich which culminated in the Holocaust, the effort undertaken by the Nazis to manipulate Christian theology and to deflect it in directions supportive of regime ideology and programs, and the absence in Fascist Italy of any counterpart to the Nazi program of *Gleichschaltung*, so that Benedetto Croce, for instance, could carry on criticizing the regime and publishing his work. Nor was there any equivalent in Italy to the Nazi *Lebensborn* program. Again, there were differences in the regimes' policies with regard to music. The Nazi regime banned not only twelve-tone music, including the music of Arnold Schönberg and Alban Berg, but also the music of Paul Hindemith, who wanted to revitalize tonality, and—during the war—the music of Igor Stravinsky and Maurice Ravel. By contrast, the music of these composers continued to be performed in Fascist Italy.²⁷⁵

It is, however, their shared animosity to individualism, liberalism, equality, tolerance, and democracy, and their aspiration to fashion an alternative modernity through a process of national-spiritual rebirth, which mark Italian Fascism and German Nazism as exemplars of a fascist genre. The point I wish to stress here is that regimes should be assessed primarily by their visions, values, programs, their impact on their people (and on other peoples), and their legacy. Both the Italian Fascist regime and the German Nazi regime believed that the West had grown decadent and wanted to promote the regeneration of their nations, building respectively on largely falsified reimaginings of ancient Rome and the ancient Germanic tribes.²⁷⁶ Looking at the themes of this volume (freedom vs. obedience to the state, the individual vs. the collective, social equality and toleration vs. social hierarchy and intolerance, the rule of law vs. the will of the leader, and neutrality of the state in the religious sphere vs. state support for one religion or for its own interpretation of religion), we may say the following: both regimes treated their citizens instrumentally, viewing men as potential or actual soldiers in the war for empire and women as mothers and nurturers; this, in turn, means that both regimes were committed to programs of gender inequality.²⁷⁷ Again, both the Italian Fascist regime and the German Nazi regime demanded outward conformity to rules and norms far exceeding

anything found in liberal democratic regimes, and, ideally, wanted to reshape people's minds so that they would actually think as the power-holders wished. Neither regime succeeded in the latter respect but, while the extreme violations of human rights in the Third Reich provoked a measure of resistance among young people, such as those associated with the Swing Movement or the White Rose group, there were no comparable signs of revolt among the young in Fascist Italy.²⁷⁸ But that does not mean that Mussolini succeeded in closing the gap between people's outward behavior and their thinking. On the contrary, he bemoaned at one point that "consent is as unstable as the sand formations on the edge of the sea."²⁷⁹

The Fascist motto, "Believe, obey, fight," expressed both the prioritization of obedience at the expense of freedom and the instrumentalization of the individual to serve the purposes of the collective, as defined by the leader. In Fascist Italy, there was, however, *some* room for alternative views in culture, provided that those views did not assume an oppositionist-political aspect. In Nazi Germany, as we have already seen, there was no such room. As a state founded on the principle of race, the Third Reich was committed to a program of "cleansing" the nation, and this notion of cleansing entailed in turn a concept of purity which was applied not only to race, but also to town (re)planning,²⁸⁰ history, archeology,²⁸¹ myth, and so forth. The racial principle meant that the Nazis believed that there was a natural hierarchy of races and nations, which in turn justified discrimination, persecution, and even extermination of those whom the Nazis considered inferior. In such a state, there was, accordingly, no room for the rule of law and the only freedom was the freedom to compete to be the most enthusiastic in support of the regime.

Both regimes failed in several respects. Most obviously, they failed to emerge victorious in World War II and were swept away after just twenty-one years in the case of Mussolini's regime, and barely twelve years in the case of Hitler's regime. Second, they failed utterly to unite their respective peoples, failing to build conformity based on hatred (e.g., of Jews in Germany) and fear, neither of which provides a stable foundation for long-term unity. Third, the programs they pursued had unintended and unwelcome consequences. To take one example, the

impact of the Hitler Youth on education in Germany was so deleterious that, in Bamberg, nearly a third of students enrolled in the *Oberrealschule* in 1937 received report cards with very low grades.²⁸² In fact, according to Daniel Horn, both by their overt rebellion against and defiance of school authorities, and by their scheduling of lengthy exercises that kept students from doing their homework, the Hitler Youth “brought about such a catastrophic decline in academic quality that it placed Germany in jeopardy of losing its technical and industrial preeminence.”²⁸³ Fourth, by any moral standards, the two fascist regimes can only be judged to have been moral failures. The most obvious, glaring, and tragic instance is, of course, the Holocaust, in which the Nazi regime undertook the deliberate extermination of millions of Jews, while the myth of the Italians of the Fascist era as having been a “brava gente” (good people) has now been largely discredited.²⁸⁴

Finally, are Fascism and Nazism of purely historical or theoretical interest, or do they have some continued presence or relevance even today? The answer to this question must begin by noting that the ideologies of fascism and Nazism are not dead, although they continue to evolve. First, as of 1994, there were some 400,000 members of neofascist or neo-Nazi organizations spread across at least sixteen European countries from Britain to Russia. Second, intolerant messages of an extreme right orientation have been disseminated by various bands and performers in recent years, including Absurd, a National Socialist black metal band founded in Sonderhausen, Germany, in 1992, by Hendrik Möbus and Sebastian Schauseil; Gontyna Kry (supposedly meaning Temple of Blood in a Proto-Slavic language), a Polish National Socialist black metal band founded in 1993 by Warterz “Bard” Neur and Komes Lupul Kurhan; Brigada NS, a Brazilian white power band from Sao Paulo which issued an album in 2001 with racist lyrics and a swastika on the cover; Nokturnal Mortum, a black metal band from Ukraine associated with local neo-Nazi currents; Temnozor, a Russian National Socialist black metal band; and Grand Belial’s Key, another National Socialist black metal band, based in the United States and formed in 1992. Third, the presence of persons with fascistic or Nazi views in parties with other names and programs may exercise an influence on those parties and their programs. Fourth, some people are afraid of people of

different races or of members of sexual minorities, and some of them may be ready to support intolerant solutions (as per the passage of legislation in several American states banning same-sex marriage). Fifth, the current Islamophobia among some sectors of the Christian populations of North America and Europe can play into support for intolerant policies and support for extremist parties.

Today, there is some blurring of the categories neo-Nazi and neo-fascist and many of those who are called neo-fascists nowadays are actually closer in spirit to Nazism. The central criterion is, to reiterate, whether race is prioritized or not. Not everyone who is opposed to a racially mixed society is a (neo-)Nazi, but every (neo-)Nazi is opposed to a racially mixed society.

Notes

- 1 Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 259; and Jeremy Noakes, "Social Outcasts in the Third Reich", in *Life in the Third Reich*, ed. Richard Bessel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987; reprinted 2001), 86.
- 2 David Redles, *Hitler's Millennial Reich: Apocalyptic Belief and the Search for Salvation* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 65.
- 3 Ibid., 56. Hitler took this idea from Dieter Eckart, to whom he dedicated his *Mein Kampf*.
- 4 As quoted in *ibid.*, 56.
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- 222 Peter Jelavich, "National Socialism, Art and Power in the 1930s," *Past & Present*, no. 164 (August 1999), 256.
- 223 Christa Kamanetsky, "Folklore as a Political Tool in Nazi Germany," *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 85, no. 337 (July–September 1972), 228–29.
- 224 Hans Schemm, *Nachrichtenblatt für Deutsche Vorzeit*, vol. 10, no. 6 (1934), as quoted in Bettina Arnold, "Ariërdämmerung: Race and Archaeology in Nazi Germany," in *World Archaeology*, vol. 38, no. 1 (March 2006), 13. See also Bettina Arnold, "The Past as Propaganda: Totalitarian Archaeology in Nazi Germany," *Antiquity*, vol. 64, no. 244 (1990), 464–78; and Klaus Junker, "Research under Dictatorship: The German Archaeological Institute 1929–1945," in *Antiquity*, vol. 72, no. 276 (1998), 282–92.
- 225 Hagen, "Historic Preservation in Nazi Germany," 705.
- 226 As quoted in *ibid.*, 705.
- 227 Alan Bullock, *Hitler, A Study in Tyranny*, rev. ed. (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1962; this edition, 1964), 511–12.
- 228 "German Tanks in World War 2, Panzer," www.2worldwar2.com/german-tanks.htm.
- 229 Fritzsche, *Life and Death*, 162.
- 230 See Henrik O. Lunde, *Hitler's Pre-Emptive War: The Battle for Norway, 1940* (Philadelphia and Newbury: Casemate, 2008).
- 231 "Deutschland rettet Skandinavien!: Norwegen und Dänemark unter den Schutz des Reiches genommen," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 11 April 1940, 1.
- 232 "All Participants of World War II," *Kommersant*, 31 May 2005, www.kommersant.com/p576136/r_1/All_Participants_of_World_War_II/.
- 233 Carlo De Risio, *Generali, Servizi Segreti e Fascismo: La guerra nella guerra 1940–1943* (Gorizia: Libreria Editrice Goriziana, 2011; reprint of Mondadori, 1978), 97.
- 234 "All Participants of World War II."
- 235 Frank McDonough, with John Cochrane, *The Holocaust* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 36.
- 236 Ibid., 37–39, 152–53.
- 237 Ibid., 41–42.
- 238 As quoted in *ibid.*, p.45.

- 239 Ibid., 45; and Fritzsche, *Life and Death*, 181. Karl Schleunes, in his *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz*, is of the same mind. See his *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz*, 178–83, 275–76, and passim.
- 240 Kallis, *Fascist Ideology*, 183.
- 241 Ibid., 189.
- 242 The Serbian putschists removed Prince Paul after he signed the Anti-Comintern Pact with the Third Reich, but then immediately informed Berlin that they would respect the terms of the pact. But Hitler was not satisfied with this reassurance. See Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*, 110–11.
- 243 *Völkischer Beobachter*, 23 June 1941, 1.
- 244 Anders Frankson, “Summer 1941,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 13, no. 3 (September 2000), 134.
- 245 Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 487.
- 246 Fritzsche, *Life and Death*, 183.
- 247 Boris Kavalerchik, “Once Again about the T-34,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1 (2015), 187.
- 248 William Craig, *Enemy at the Gates: The Battle for Stalingrad* (New York: Reader’s Digest Press & E. Dutton, 1973), xiv–xv, 385. Fritzsche offers a lower estimate of German casualties, reporting that 150,000 German troops lost their lives at Stalingrad, with 90,000 taken prisoner. *Life and Death*, 279.
- 249 Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, 510–11.
- 250 Anna Rosmus, “Involuntary Abortions for Polish Forced Laborers,” in *Experience and Expression*, ed. Baer and Goldenberg, 77.
- 251 Ibid., 78.
- 252 This is the argument made in Christopher R. Browning, with contributions by Jürgen Matthäus, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939–March 1942* (Lincoln and Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press and Yad Vashem, 2004), especially chap. 7; Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire*, chap. 12; and McDonough, *The Holocaust*, chap. 3.
- 253 Browning, *Origins of the Final Solution*, 258–64.
- 254 Ibid., 244.
- 255 As quoted in *ibid.*, 265.
- 256 As quoted in *ibid.*, 266.
- 257 Ibid., 261; and Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire*, 371.
- 258 See Christian Gerlach, “The Wannsee Conference, the Fate of German Jews, and Hitler’s Decision in Principle to Exterminate All European Jews,” *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 70, no. 4 (December 1998), 763.
- 259 As quoted in Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire*, 374.
- 260 As quoted in McDonough, *The Holocaust*, 57.

- 261 As quoted in Kershaw, *Hitler*, 694.
- 262 Gerlach, "The Wannsee Conference," 761.
- 263 Kershaw, *Hitler*, 58. See also Fritzsche, *Life and Death*, 207.
- 264 McDonough, *The Holocaust*, 65–66. Fritzsche offers the following figures for the number of persons killed at Auschwitz: 1 million Jews, 74,000 non-Jewish Poles, 23,000 Gypsies, 15,000 Soviet POWs, and 25,000 others. *Life and Death*, 217. Van Pelt writes, "With more than 1.1 million victims, [Auschwitz] was the most lethal camps of all." Robert Jan van Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz: Evidence from the Irving Trial* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 80.
- 265 Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, 411.
- 266 Adolf Burger, *Des Teufels Werkstatt: Die Grösste Fälscheraktion der Geschichte* (Munich: Elisabeth Sandmann Verlag, 2007), especially 119–69.
- 267 Burleigh, *The Third Reich*, 780. The Nazis claimed at the time that the bombing had resulted in as many as 500,000 civilian deaths, and this was also the official estimate given by local authorities after the war had ended. However, in 2010, after five years of research, a group of Dresden historians offered a slightly lower figure than that given by Burleigh, suggesting that the death toll may have come to 25,000. "Nazis 'Exaggerated Dresden Death Toll,' German Historians Conclude," *Daily Telegraph*, 18 March 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-two/7470248/Nazis-exaggerated-Dresden-death-toll-German-historians-conclude.html>.
- 268 Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction*, 627.
- 269 For details, see Ian Kershaw, *Luck of the Devil: The Story of Operation Valkyrie* (London: Penguin Books, 2009).
- 270 J. Noakes and G. Pridham, eds., *Nazism 1919–1945*, vol. 3: *Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination: A Documentary Reader* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1988), 872–73.
- 271 In 2015, Bob Baer, a former CIA operative, Tim Kennedy, an American special forces operative, and Sascha Keil, a German historian from Berlin met with reporters from London's *Daily Express* to discuss an eight-part documentary they had put together in which they make the claim that Hitler did not commit suicide but managed to get to Tempelhof Airport via an underground tunnel and flee Germany. According to these investigators, who based their conclusions on some 700 FBI files that had been declassified in 2014, as well as on interviews with various witnesses in Spain and Argentina, Hitler managed to get to Spain first, and then eventually to Argentina, where he allegedly died at the age of ninety-five. See James Rampton, "Does Secret Tunnel Discovered under Berlin Prove Hitler Survived WWII and Fled Germany?," *Express*, 13 October 2015, <http://www.express.co.uk/news/history/611229/Adolf-Hitler-tunnel-freedom>; see also *Intellihub News & Politics*, 23 July 2015, "Declassified

- Secret FBI Files Prove Hitler Escaped to Argentina in 1945," <https://www.intellihub.com/declassified-secret-fbi-files-prove-hitler-escaped-to-argentina-in-1945/>.
- 272 Rauscher, *Hitler und Mussolini*, 602.
- 273 Friedman, *The Lion and the Star*, 125.
- 274 Robert Koehl, "Nazi State and Neo-Feudalism," in Kallis, ed., *The Fascism Reader*, 274.
- 275 Fiamma Nicolodi, "Übereinstimmungen und Unterschiede in der Musikpolitik des Faschismus und des Nationalsozialismus," trans. from Italian by Loredana Melissari, *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, vol. 69, no. 4 (2012), 369, 370, 372.
- 276 On the latter point, see Bettina Arnold, "'Arierdämmerung,' Race and Archaeology in Nazi Germany," *World Archaeology*, vol. 38, no. 1 (March 2006), 8–31.
- 277 Peter Neville, *Mussolini* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 110; Sandro Bellassai, "The Masculine Mystique: Antimodernism and Virility in Fascist Italy," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3 (2005), 314–35; Arnold, "Arierdämmerung," 9; and Leila J. Rupp, "Mother of the 'Volk': The Image of Women in Nazi Ideology," *Signs*, vol. 3, no. 2 (Winter 1977), 362–79.
- 278 Neville, *Mussolini*, 107, 207.
- 279 As quoted in Victoria de Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organizations of Leisure in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 225.
- 280 On this point, see Joshua Hagen, "The Most German of Towns: Creating an Ideal Nazi Community in Rothenburg ob der Tauber," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 94, no. 1 (2004), 207–27, especially 218–19.
- 281 Arnold, "Arierdämmerung," especially 20–22.
- 282 Horn, "The Hitler Youth and Educational Decline," 434.
- 283 *Ibid.*, 426.
- 284 See the discussion in Davide Rodogno, *Fascism's European Empire: Italian Occupation during the Second World War*, trans. from Italian by Adrian Belton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

CHAPTER 5

The Quest for Freedom and Solidarity: Anarchism in Spain

Anarchists are committed to the principle of communal, especially working-class, solidarity and to the idea that people can organize their society without the relations of subordination and control which come with the formation of a formal government. Unlike libertarians (such as Robert Nozick) who stress individual interests and who advocate reducing the state to minimal functions, limited to protecting people from violence, theft, and fraud, and performing similar policing functions, anarchists seek to abolish the state altogether and to substitute direct coordination between people working for their common interests. Because of the emphasis on solidarity and communal self-organization, anarchists place their emphasis on the good of the collective, while stressing, nonetheless, that their vision promises, at the same time, to maximize freedom for individuals insofar as they will no longer owe obedience to external authorities. Social hierarchy and intolerance are rejected, and social equality emphasized. Historically, anarchists have tended to be hostile to religious organizations and, in the Spanish case, anarchists acted out that hostility.

In the decades leading up to the launch of the rebel insurgency in July 1936, there were four alternative visions in Spain competing for dominance: the conservative Catholic vision, reflected in the 1864 “Syllabus of Errors”; the progressive Republican vision of a secular state, which held sway in the second Spanish Republic from its establishment in April 1931 until about March 1938, when the Republic began to backtrack; several varieties of communism, both Stalinist and anti-Stalinist; and anarchism, which was profoundly hostile to the Church and to communism alike, but which ultimately compromised on its principle of noncooperation with a “bourgeois” republic. Once General Francisco Franco raised the banner of rebellion, initiating a three-year civil

war, the Republic found itself defended by a heterogeneous group of antifascists, including democratic-minded Republicans, communists loyal to Stalin, a quasi-Trotskyist movement, and the anarchists. Eventually, in the course of the Spanish Civil War and as Franco's insurgent forces gained ground, some anarchists decided to join the government, in hopes of contributing to a united antifascist front. More consistent anarchists held that joining the government, indeed any government, signified nothing less than a betrayal of the anarchist vision.

Anarchism is about freedom, but whereas democratic systems seek to assure freedom through representation and through laws that protect freedom of action, the anarchists of Spain wanted to realize their freedom through collective organization. In their view, thus, there is no intrinsic contradiction between the interests of the collective and the interests of the individual. Anarchism is also about equality—the byword of communists. But whereas the Soviet communists sought to achieve greater social and economic equality by socializing all property, regulating it through party/state agencies, over which the highest echelons (and in 1928–53, Stalin) stood supreme, the anarchists rejected both the rule of law (including what the Soviets called *socialist law*) and rule by a supreme leader. Since they hoped to abolish the state, the issue of the attitude of the state toward religion did not arise for the anarchists, although most of them—whether those in Spain or their contemporaries in Italy, Ukraine, and elsewhere—were hostile to organized religion.

Anarchism is the creed which holds that the state serves as a repressive force and that it would be possible to construct a stateless society in which, on the basis of direct, local coordination, libertarian collectivism (or “libertarian communism” as it has sometimes been called), and mutual aid, people would live better than they have lived in societies governed by states. This definition puts a premium on the ideas developed by Mikhail Bakunin, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and Petr Kropotkin, while excluding the problematic ideas of Max Stirner, who is better viewed as an egoist (as he called himself) or, better yet, as a nihilistic egoist.¹ Bakunin (1814–76), perhaps the best known of the anarchists, defined *anarchy* as “the free and independent organization of all the units and parts of the community and their voluntary federation from below

upward, not by the orders of any authority, even an elected one, and not by the dictates of any scientific theory, but as a result of the natural development of all the varied demands put forth by life itself.”²

Although one may count the sixteenth-century German millenarian pastor Thomas Müntzer (1489/90–1525) and the seventeenth-century English political activist Gerrard Winstanley (1609–76) and his Diggers as *precursors* of anarchism, anarchism proper may be said to have been born in the wake of the French Revolution. It was in revolutionary France in 1792 that a group called the *enrages* (the fanatics) appeared, calling on people to take direct action against exploiters and profiteers; Jacques Roux and Jean Varlet, the leaders of this group, specifically rejected revolutionary government as such because, to their minds, no government could be truly revolutionary and, therefore, no revolution could be spearheaded or tolerated by a government.³

It was also at this time that William Godwin (1756–1836), an English journalist, philosopher, and novelist, wrote his book, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), in which he sketched out his view of how an anarchist society might function. In this work, Godwin argued that governments generate wars and that human nature is, to a large extent, shaped by external circumstances—which is to say, such institutions and practices as exist in a given society, its traditions, and events. Godwin was particularly exercised by those who argued that “a community ... has a right to lay down whatever rules it may think proper for its own observance”—a view which he described as “an erroneous position.”⁴ It followed, for Godwin, that “politics having been thus violently separated from morality, government itself has no longer been compared with its true criterion. Instead of enquiring what species of government was most conducive to the public welfare, an unprofitable disquisition has been instituted respecting the probable origin of government; and its different forms have been [appraised], not by the consequences with which they were pregnant, but [by] the source from which they sprung.”⁵ Government may have justified itself as needed to suppress injustice but, Godwin argued, government served as a source for new injustices and as an instrument for the persecution and oppression of the weak by the strong.⁶

Anarchism in the form in which it was understood in Spain in the first four decades of the twentieth century was, however, influenced and

formed rather by the ideas of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–65),⁷ the aforementioned Bakunin, Petr Kropotkin (1842–1921),⁸ and the Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta (1853–1932),⁹ all of whom served time in prison, typically escaping. Proudhon, in his book, *What Is Property?* (1840), emphasized the anarchist principles of freedom (or liberty), equality, and security, which he described as absolute rights. Proudhon sketched a vision of how people might organize their society from the bottom up. According to his concept,

The organization of administration should begin locally and as near the direct control of the people as possible; individuals should start the process of federating into communes and association[s]. Above that primary level the confederal organization would become less an organ of administration than of coordination between local units. Thus the nation would be replaced by a geographical confederation of regions, and Europe would become a confederation of confederations, in which the interest of the smallest province would have as much expression as that of the largest and in which all affairs would be settled by mutual agreement, contract, and arbitration.¹⁰

Bakunin and Proudhon both offered some prescriptions for a future anarchist society. But it was Kropotkin who devoted the most attention to this, noting (in harmony with Proudhon and Bakunin) that “neither the existing Governments, nor any which might arise out of possible political changes, would be capable of finding a solution” to the problem of social injustice.¹¹ Thus, Kropotkin called for a social revolution to destroy government, and establish a new collectivized system of property. But, he emphasized, “A new form of property requires a new form of remuneration. A new method of production cannot exist side by side with the old forms of consumption, any more than it can adapt itself to the old forms of political organization.”¹² In other words, all of society would have to be reconstructed from the bottom up.

In summary, thus, the central ideas of the “classical” anarchists are:

1. that the separation of the state from society gives rise to domination and subordination, repression, violence, and dehumanization;

2. that the institution of private property fosters greed, giving rise to exploitation of various kinds, and that the economic inequality associated with private property gives rise to political and civic inequality;
3. that equality and freedom are desirable and should be the objects of political action; and
4. that it is possible and desirable to abolish government in the traditional sense, replacing the coercive agency of political power with the self-organization of communities on the basis of mutual aid and communal solidarity.

As a means to realize these values, the anarchists (Bakunin, in particular) proposed that working people should themselves organize society on the basis of collective ownership of property, equal division of labor and products (or according to ability and need), the depoliticization of schools, the direct participation of all workers in communal decision-making, and the suppression of institutions of violence (such as the professional police and professional army).

ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Every war has the potential to generate controversies, and most do so. When it comes to the Spanish Civil War, there continue to be disagreements and controversies about a number of issues, including the nature of the Republic and the reasons for the rebellion by right-wing officers in the military; the role played by Great Britain and the Soviet Union (the role played by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy is not a matter of controversy, except to some extent in connection with the controversy about the reasons for the rebels' victory); wartime executions and atrocities; and the reason(s) for the defeat of the Republic by the rebel forces commanded by General Francisco Franco (1892–1975). These controversies will be discussed in seriatim, to provide a context for the discussion to follow.

To begin with, it is important to keep in mind that the controversies began even before the Spanish Civil War ended and continued

throughout the years Franco ruled Spain. However, for as long as Franco was alive, only his point of view was allowed to circulate legally in Spain; alternative viewpoints, however, were kept alive outside Spain by the various supporters of the Republic, whether liberals, socialists, communists, or anarchists, who had fled Spain at the conclusion of the struggle. A key contention in Francoist propaganda already during the war was that, in summer 1936, the communists, in collaboration with the socialists and anarchists, were about to seize power, so that the military revolt could be construed as prophylactic.¹³ Despite the lack of evidence of any such conspiracy,¹⁴ some were quick to accept the allegation at face value. For example, the Comte de Saint-Aubaire, France's ambassador to Madrid, would assert in 1938 that "those who accuse Franco forget also that by the month of July all the preparations [had been] made by order of Moscow, to install the terror, the Soviet regime, in all Spain."¹⁵ Two years earlier, Sir Henry Chilton, Britain's ambassador to Madrid, had reported to Whitehall that he feared that socialist leader Francisco Largo Caballero (1869–1946) was planning to establish a Soviet republic "in which case the lives and property of no one would be safe."¹⁶ Sir Maurice Hankey, secretary to the British cabinet, went even further and struck a panicky note on 20 July 1936, when he opined that "with France and Spain menaced by Bolshevism, it is not inconceivable that before long it may pay us to throw in our lot with Germany and Italy."¹⁷ To appeal to the Catholic Church, some of whose clergy had indeed been killed by local anarchists, Franco's advocates claimed that the rebellion was a "holy war" to defend the Catholic Church from anticlericalism and atheism. This was, in fact, self-serving propaganda intended first to legitimate the insurrection and, later, to justify Franco's dictatorship. But the rebels were not driven by concern for the Church; their purpose was to establish a secular dictatorship, reverse gains made by Spanish women in terms of some lessening of social inequality, suppress liberal ideas in general, and wipe out alternative thoughts.¹⁸ Rebel General Emilio Mola was quite clear on this point when he ordered his forces to "eliminate without scruples or hesitation all who do not think as we do."¹⁹ For the anarchist version of friend/foe thinking, one may recall Spanish anarchist Jaume Balius's comment that "he who is not with the workers is a fascist and should be treated as such."²⁰

The Nature of the Republic and Reasons for the Rebellion

Among scholars, Stanley Payne comes perhaps closest to endorsing the Francoist justification for the insurrection in that he alleges that Spanish democracy had been undermined and destroyed by leftists before the launch of the insurrection in July 1936.²¹ Ominously, Payne reports that, “in a large joint Socialist–Communist rally on 22 January [1936] in Madrid, Largo Caballero spoke and the young Communist leader Jesús Hernández announced that the two groups were working toward a united revolutionary Marxist party to achieve ‘armed insurrection for the conquest of power and the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat.’”²² In Chris Ealham’s summary of Payne’s interpretation, “according to Payne’s schema, once the Popular Front won the elections in February 1936, it set about institutionalizing its power by establishing a dictatorship designed to exclude permanently the right from the institutional arena, a course of action that made civil war inevitable.”²³

Against this representation, Helen Graham counters that “The Republic was the first regime [in Spain] that assumed ordinary people had rights. And that language of rights [which] the Republic spoke, and more importantly, allowed to be spoken, permitted people in small-town and village Spain who dared to, to think differently. This, perhaps more than anything else, was what drove patrician Spain to sheer apoplexy.”²⁴ For those sympathetic to the Republic, the war did not begin, as Francoists suggest, months or even years before July 1936. Nonetheless, as Rafael Cruz has pointed out, the Spanish Right adopted a strategy several months before July of fomenting fear and exaggerating problems, in order to undermine people’s trust in Republican authorities and institutions.²⁵ Conservative Spaniards—whether clerical or lay, military or civilian—believed, as Paul Preston has put it, that there was an “‘authentic Spain’ that had to be preserved and [an] ‘anti-Spain’ that had to be exterminated.” With this *idée fixe* in their minds, “the rebels aimed to annihilate the organized working class, left-wing and liberal culture, gender equality and the nationalist aspirations of Basques, Catalans and Galicians.”²⁶

What is already clear is that, among historians, there are those who are sympathetic to the Republic and to the anarchists (such as Robert

Alexander²⁷ and Vernon Richards²⁸), some who are sympathetic to the Republic and believe that the (Stalinist) communists of the PCE (*Partido Comunista de España*) supported the Republic loyally (such as Helen Graham²⁹), some sympathetic to the Republic but critical of the role played by the anarchists (such as Paul Preston³⁰), some showing deep antipathy to much that was going on in the Republic (such as Stanley Payne³¹), and others who feared that, in the event of a victory by the Republic, the communists (according to Antony Beevor³²) or the anarchists (according to Gerald Brenan³³) would have introduced a tyrannical dictatorship as harsh as Franco's, if not worse.

The Role Played by Great Britain and the Soviet Union

Great Britain

In considering the response of the Western powers to the outbreak of the Civil War, it is important to keep in mind that they all had investments in Spain—investments threatened by moves on the part of leftists in the Republican zone to collectivize the industries and enterprises owned by foreign concerns. On this point, it is worth quoting José Peirats (1908–89) at length:

The United States [had] established a bridgehead in the shape of the Telephone Company. Britain and Canada had established a presence in the middle years of the nineteenth century and controlled electric power firms, naval shipyards, mines and transport facilities, etc. Belgium, Switzerland and France [had] placed their investments with tram, gas and other companies. Germany favoured the chemical industries.

To all intents and purposes, only small business and small industries were in Spanish hands. The more important major industries and commercial undertakings were in foreign hands, especially British ones. British capital had found a foothold in the Bilbao mining zone either independently or in conjunction with native investment. England owned the Rio Tinto copper mines. In adjacent areas, Rio Tinto controlled mines of another sort, and iron and steel foundries ...

The British had sizeable holdings [also] in the aluminum industry and in locomotive construction.³⁴

Given the extent of British investments, it would have been more than a bit surprising if Whitehall could have been truly neutral, as the official line held, in a conflict pitting rebels who gave every sign of being prepared to respect foreign investments against a government in which leftists of various stripes were either openly advocating collectivization or suspected, by Whitehall, of favoring such a policy. Indeed, although Spanish communists kept quiet on this subject, Sir Horace Seymour brooded (in September 1936) that a communist regime in Spain would “mean the loss of the whole of British invested capital” in that country.³⁵

Despite this, Patricia van der Esch³⁶ and William Laird Klein-Ahlbrandt³⁷ maintained that Great Britain was even-handed in the Spanish conflict and did not favor either side. Challenging their point of view, Douglas Little has pointed out that the British browbeat French Prime Minister Léon Blum (1872–1950) before the end of July 1936 into terminating arms sales to the Republic; France then joined Britain in blocking the Republic’s efforts to obtain weaponry from other markets.³⁸ Needless to say, the British government made no effort to stop Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy from assisting the rebels. In addition, the Bank of England froze the Spanish government’s sterling assets.³⁹ Little wonders that President Manuel Azaña (1880–1940) wrote in his diary (on 31 May 1937): “Our greatest enemy until now has been the British government. All the schemes devised for non-intervention and their consequences have damaged the government and favoured the rebels. Their hypocrisy has become so obvious that it seemed infantile cynicism.”⁴⁰ The fact that Britain’s anti-Republic stance was driven by fear of communist contagion and the loss of its investments does not mitigate the fact of the tilt in British policy.

The Soviet Union

When it comes to the Soviet Union’s intentions in involving itself in the Spanish Civil War, the range of theories and speculations is impressive.

At one extreme, we have the suggestion by Walter Krivitsky that Stalin's objective in assisting the Republic was nothing less than to bring Spain into the USSR's sphere of influence.⁴¹ If true, that would have presumed an all-out effort on the Kremlin's part, even involving taking some risks, where the other powers were concerned. Helen Graham disputes this, writing that "Soviet aid was insufficient to do more than keep the Republic afloat,"⁴² but not sufficient to enable it to suppress the rebellion. Stalin was not prepared to let Germany and Italy ride roughshod over the Spanish Republic, but he was also concerned, as Francisco Romero Salvadó has stressed, lest "a Republican victory, leading to a social revolution in Spain, could result in driving the Allies [Great Britain and France] to side with Germany against the Soviet Union."⁴³ This explains why the Spanish Stalinists of the PSUC (the major Stalinist Communist Party in Spain) were opposed to any form of social revolution in their country and why they went so far as to deny that there was anything going on anywhere in Spain worthy of being called a revolution.⁴⁴ Yet there is some dispute as to whether Stalin's primary concern at this point in time was to keep doors open to a future alliance with Britain and France, as Preston suggests,⁴⁵ or whether, on the contrary, he was more concerned lest an outright victory over the fascists would make it more difficult to reach an agreement with Nazi Germany in the future, as Roy Medvedev suggests.⁴⁶

Wartime Executions

There are two interlocking controversies when it comes to wartime executions (and atrocities). The first involves numbers, including which side executed more people. In fact, although some earlier writers claimed that the Republic executed more people than the rebels, there is today a general consensus that the rebels executed more people than the defenders of the Republic, with a majority of scholars estimating that the rebels executed about three times as many persons as the Republicans (see Table 5.1). The second controversy has to do with how much control, if any, Republican authorities had over executions and atrocities carried out by their forces.

The estimates of the number executed are highly divergent, as shown in the following table:

TABLE 5.1
Estimates of the number of executions during the Spanish Civil War⁴⁷

Executed by Republicans	Executed by Rebels	Source
20,000	more than 200,000	Jackson
38,000	150,000	Durgan/Romero Salvadó
49,272	130,199	Espinosa/Ledesma
50,000	150,000	Preston
50,000–60,000	150,000	Ruiz
56,000	approx. 64,000	Payne
under 60,000	under 100,000	Casanova and Andres

Based on Table 5.1, we may speak of a rough consensus that there were between 50,000 and 60,000 extrajudicial executions perpetrated by Republican forces, as against approximately 150,000 extrajudicial executions carried out by the rebels. To these figures one should add the roughly 150,000 combat casualties for both sides combined, plus some 25,000 casualties among foreign volunteers and recruits.⁴⁸ Just over half a million people fled from Spain in the last few months of the war, mostly those who had fought for the Republic.⁴⁹ According to Chris Ealham, about 270,000 persons were imprisoned after the war ended; an additional 50,000 persons were shot at that time.⁵⁰

There is a broad consensus that the wartime executions carried out by the rebels were planned and coordinated. As Julián Casanova put it in his contribution to *Victimas de la guerra civil* (1999), “the repression was from the start of the Civil War an ‘operation of extermination’, firmly under the control of the military rebel leadership.”⁵¹ By contrast, debate continues as to whether the executions and atrocities carried out by Republican forces were likewise under the control of their respective leaders, or not. Gabriel Jackson, for example, maintains that Republican violence was the work of “gangs of juvenile delinquents,” criminals, and others acting on their own volition.⁵² It is perhaps of some interest that most of the extrajudicial murders in the Republican zone took place

where there was at most a weak anarchist presence.⁵³ Paul Preston and Michael Richards are in agreement with Jackson, and argue that Republican violence was spontaneous, coming as a response to the atrocities committed by the rebels, and not premeditated, as it was on the part of the rebels.⁵⁴

Julius Ruiz and Stanley Payne have contested this contention, with Payne arguing that the “Red Terror ... was not a product of blind, spontaneous mob fury. Nearly all the work of the Red Terror was carried on by small groups of the revolutionary parties ... in most cases with the approval and sometimes at the initiative of superiors in their organization.”⁵⁵

Reasons for the Defeat of the Republic

The final controversy to be discussed here has to do with the reason(s) for the defeat of the Republic by Franco’s rebel forces. As George Esenwein has reminded us, in the years of the Cold War, when the Franco regime was a *de facto* ally of the United States, there was a strong tendency to accept the Francoist line that the internal fracturing on the Republican side and, in particular, the role of the Soviet NKVD and local communists in marginalizing the anarchists and murdering members of the revolutionary POUM (Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista) were the main causes of the defeat of the Republic.⁵⁶ Few scholars today place the emphasis on internal factors. On the contrary, the overwhelming consensus among contemporary scholars is that the combination of German and Italian intervention on the side of the rebels and the British decision to strangle the republic with an arms embargo and a *de facto* economic blockade were the decisive factors in assuring Franco’s victory and the death of democracy in Spain.⁵⁷ Indeed, Helen Graham suggests that Nazi and Fascist intervention rescued Franco’s forces from probable defeat in the face of large-scale resistance in the cities.⁵⁸

Summing up the Debates

What should be clear from this brief review of debates and controversies about the Spanish Civil War is that they need to be seen against the background of the debates between the antagonists in the war itself. Thus, the Francoists argued that the Republic had become decadent and had started the war, that the internal divisions within the Republican camp were more important than foreign intervention in accounting for their victory over the Republic, that there was not a huge difference between the number of executions carried out by the rebels and the number carried out by the Republicans (and that, if anything, the Republicans executed more people than the rebels), and finally that the rebels orchestrated and controlled the executions their forces carried out. Although one can still find a few historians who have accepted one or more of these premises (such as Payne on the alleged undermining of democracy already before July 1936, or Julius Ruiz, who maintains that Republican authorities largely maintained control over executions carried out by their forces), most historians today reject these premises. On the contrary, the consensus among historians today is that the Francoist rebels started the war against a democracy, which was by no means decadent (although it is true that anarchists were killing priests already before the war began), that the decisive factors in accounting for the outcome of the war were the German and Italian intervention and the British policy of isolating and strangling the Republic, and that the rebels carried out several times as many wartime executions as the Republican side. In addition, a majority of historians writing in English have concluded that the rebels, but not the Republicans, carried out the executions in a planned and systematic way in order to eliminate people not in agreement with their political views.

RIVAL VISIONS I: THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND ITS CRITICS/FOES

In the *Syllabus of Errors* issued by Pope Pius IX in 1864, the Holy See asserted that the Catholic Church was “a true and perfect society” and that its religion was “the only true religion.” The pontiff continued by

claiming that the Church and its clerics enjoyed immunity from civil law and did not owe that immunity to civil authorities, but to God. Further on, Pope Pius IX denied that human reason could suffice to determine truth versus falsehood, or good versus evil, repudiated any notion of religious freedom, rejected Protestantism as not equally pleasing to God in comparison with Catholicism, described secular education as an error, and condemned the notion of Church-state separation. Finally, toward the end of the list of 80 alleged errors, the pope denied that marriage could be dissolved by any means other than one of the partners taking a vow of chastity.⁵⁹ This last point was to be reemphasized by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Casti Connubii* (1930), which was devoted to defending the traditional idea of marriage against “the false principles of a new and utterly perverse morality,” which condones infidelity and sanctions divorce. In this context, the Holy Father also called for “the ready subjection of the wife [to her husband] and her willing obedience.” Lest his condemnation of premarital or extramarital sex be somehow missed, the pope characterized temporary unions and unions without lifelong commitment as “hateful abominations which beyond all question reduce our truly cultured nations to the barbarous standards of savage peoples.”⁶⁰

It was precisely the Church’s vision of an ideal society that the Second Republic was to threaten. Immediately after its proclamation in April 1931, the Republic brought an end to mandatory religious instruction and set about introducing secular education. The new authorities also announced plans to legalize divorce, secularize hospitals and cemeteries, and force a reduction in the number of religious orders in Spain. The cardinal-primate responded to the government’s program with an acerbic pastoral letter on 1 May 1931, in which he all but declared the Republic illegitimate. He was thereupon expelled from the country.⁶¹ The Republic’s authorities ignored the cardinal-primate’s protest and, in January 1932, disbanded the Jesuit Order and sequestered its property. After that, the government called for a Law on Congregations, “forbidding the Orders to engage in commerce, industry, and teaching.”⁶² The law was passed in May 1933 in the Cortes by a vote of 278 to 50. Religious orders were obliged to close their secondary schools by 1 October 1933 and their primary schools by early 1934. In spite of these legislative acts,

a minority of Spain's bishops held back from condemning the Republic and urged a stance of wait-and-see, in hopes that the anticlerical spirit that animated the Republic in its early months would subside. Indeed, the pontiff himself adopted a pragmatic approach by appointing Bishop Isidro Gomá y Tomás of Tarazona and Toledo in April 1932 to assume the office of Cardinal-Primate: Gomá y Tomás was not associated with either the monarchists/conservatives or liberal Catholics. In his first pastoral letter, even while reiterating the Church's admonition to parents to send their children to Catholic schools, "he reminded the faithful of their duty to accept the constitutional civil power, even as in pagan Rome."⁶³

But there were further measures inimical to Church interests, including new restrictions on religious processions, on the ringing of church bells, and on celebrations of the Virgin Mary and sundry local saints. The Republican government also decreed religious liberty, thereby showing its disregard, if not contempt, for the *Syllabus of Errors*. Moreover, Article 3 of the new constitution provided that Spain would have no official religion. The Vatican protested that both of these measures violated the Concordat of 1851. Article 26, affecting state subsidies to the Church was likewise hugely controversial and, after it was passed in the Cortes (by a vote of 178 to 39, with many abstentions), Prime Minister Niceto Alcalá Zamora and Minister of Internal Affairs Miguel Maura—both practicing Catholics—resigned from office.⁶⁴ The legislators also offered a civil alternative to Church marriage and funerals, and passed a liberal law on divorce.

The Catholic Church, thus, felt profoundly alienated in Republican Spain—indeed, under siege. The Church responded, inter alia, by undertaking a mass mobilization of its faithful in 1933–36.⁶⁵ Indeed, through its press and associations, the Church "played a considerable role in generating the tensions, fears, and hatreds that prevailed in Spain during the spring and summer of 1936, and that had made the military coup feasible."⁶⁶ In addition, in response to the Republic's moves to equalize the status of women and men, including the grant of suffrage to women in the new constitution (approved on 9 December 1931),⁶⁷ conservative circles denounced such measures as reflecting "imported

feminism” and set about to mobilize women to vote for conservative candidates.⁶⁸

In April 1932, Juan Ansaldo, a monarchist conspirator, was received in Rome by the minister of aeronautics, Italo Balbo. Ansaldo’s purpose was “to secure Italian support for a first tentative coup d’état being set in motion by General José Sanjurjo.”⁶⁹ Ansaldo’s mission was a success, in that the Italian regime promised to equip the rebels with 200 machine-guns.⁷⁰ The putsch, which took place later that month, failed, but conservatives won the elections of November 1933 and proceeded to scuttle some of the reforms passed in the previous two-and-a-half years; they even wanted to reverse the land redistribution reform that had been put in place. This led to the strikes and protests of 1934; and widespread frustrations with the conservative government led directly to the electoral victory of a left-wing Popular Front government in February 1936. The anger that many ordinary workers felt at the Church now boiled over and, in the course of the four months which followed the 16 February elections, 170 churches were destroyed by arson, with an additional 251 unsuccessful attempts to burn churches. Street fights proliferated, 269 persons were killed, and there were 133 general strikes.⁷¹ Rumors circulated that clergy had poisoned the water supply or were distributing poisonous candies to children. Later, after the launch of the military (fascist) uprising of July 1936, there were unconfirmed reports of fascist snipers shooting ordinary people from within churches and monasteries. As church burnings continued, the August 1936 issue of the French magazine *Vu* published a supposedly eyewitness account purporting that “all the churches which have been burned had contained Fascists.”⁷² Already in June 1933, Pope Pius XI had issued his encyclical *Dilectissima Nobis*, in which he reproved the Spanish Republic for having separated Church and state and likewise for having decreed the nationalization of Church properties. Taking stock of what he characterized as a “struggle against the Church in Spain,” the pontiff blamed this anti-Church campaign on “hatred against the Lord and his Christ nourished by groups subversive to any religious and social order.”⁷³ Now, with the rebels championing conservative values and proclaiming a “crusade” to restore the Church to its rightful place,⁷⁴ it came as no surprise that, in September 1936, Spain’s Catholic hierarchy

issued a pastoral letter, lauding the military rebellion as a righteous crusade.⁷⁵

ANARCHISM IN SPAIN

The Spanish section (the “Alliance”) of the First International was founded in 1869. Already at the outset, this body declared itself atheist and anarchist.⁷⁶ Although outlawed between 1872 and 1874, it continued its work until the dissolution of the International. The Alliance set up the Spanish Regional Federation as the “first mass-organized labor movement in Spain.”⁷⁷ It was later known as the Federation of Workers of the Spanish Region (1881–89), then as the Pact for Union and Solidarity (1889–96), and later as Worker Solidarity (1904–9).

Bakunin’s influence in Spain can be dated to October 1868, when he sent an Italian follower, Giuseppe Fanelli, to Spain. Fanelli did not know any Spanish but, in Madrid, he met Gonzales Morago, who knew a little French and used that to communicate with Fanelli. The latter spent only a few weeks in Spain, but in that brief time he won over many Spaniards to Bakunin-style anarchism and, in January 1869, his associates set up the Madrid Federation, as a local branch of the First International.⁷⁸

Proudhon’s ideas were spread by a Madrid bank official named Francisco Pi y Margall (1824–1901), who, together with others, began translating Proudhon’s works into Spanish; the high point for Proudhon’s Spanish followers came during the Revolution of 1873, in the course of which the Spanish monarchy fell. King Amadeo abdicated in June of that year, but the resulting Republic, under the presidency of Pi y Margall, was short-lived, and the monarchy was soon reestablished, under King Alfonso XII (1857–85; reigned 1875–85). Opposition to the monarchy and the conservative social order it upheld continued, with an explosion of anarchist-inspired violence in Barcelona in 1891–93; separatism in Catalonia also spread.

The aforementioned Malatesta, somewhat inaccurately called “the Italian Lenin” by some of his admirers,⁷⁹ visited Spain in 1891 and met with a group of Spanish anarchists in New Jersey in 1899, imparting his influence to the anarchist currents in Spain. Then, in 1892, there was

a peasant uprising in Jerez de la Frontera, involving about 4,000 insurgents. These peasants briefly took control of the city, shouting “Long live anarchy!”⁸⁰ In July 1909, there was turmoil in Spanish Morocco. The government called up reservists only from Catalonia. This, in turn, provoked street fighting in Barcelona, resulting in the deaths of almost 200 workers. Anarchists, socialists, and syndicalists agreed on joint action and more than fifty churches and convents were burned. The government reacted with mass arrests, torture, and summary executions.

In 1877—thirty-three years before the founding of the CNT—grass-roots cultural and social centers known as *ateneus* were set up in Barcelona, providing a range of services, including the sale of various foods at reduced prices. The *ateneus* were spearheaded by anarchists, who organized lectures, plays, and musical events; the lectures and plays tended to be radical and anticlerical in coloration.⁸¹ By the 1920s, “many anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists had immersed themselves in [the] cultural and educational activities” of the *ateneus*,⁸² thus assuring that ordinary workers would become acquainted with anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist ideas. Reinforcing this initiative, CNT strategist Joan Peiró encouraged fellow union members to associate with workers’ consumer cooperatives in order to seek funding for anarcho-syndicalist propaganda efforts.⁸³

Spanish anarchists now concluded that they needed a tougher organization and, in October 1910, representatives from trade unions across Spain assembled in Seville, where it was decided to form a new organization: this was the aforementioned Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT), which attempted to bring together revolutionary and syndicalist currents.⁸⁴ The CNT “was an anti-capitalist, direct action labour union” which owed its founding to “an amalgam of anarchists, anarcho-syndicalists, Socialists, republicans and trade unionists.”⁸⁵ Anarchism was, thus, by no means predominant in the CNT in its early years. Indeed, Teresa Mañé i Miravet, an orthodox anarchist, claimed (in August 1922) that “the majority [of the CNT membership] is closer to the dictatorship of Lenin than to the concepts of Kropotkin or Reclus.”⁸⁶ Later, as Stalin’s extreme abuses of power came to light, most of the early enthusiasm for the Bolshevik Revolution evaporated. The anarchists would have to find their own way.

The CNT's chief rival was the Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT), a socialist labor organization, which had 76,304 members in 1916.⁸⁷ The CNT and UGT agreed nonetheless on a revolutionary alliance and, on 12 August 1917, declared a general strike throughout Spain. It took seven days before authorities succeeded in breaking the strike. Four socialist leaders, among them Francisco Largo Caballero (1869–1946), who would become Secretary-General of the UGT in 1925, were put in prison in connection with the strike.⁸⁸ By 1919, membership in the CNT had risen to 715,000, making it about three times as large as the UGT at the time.⁸⁹ More than half of them were Catalans.

Political violence escalated between 1919 and 1923; militant unionists were repeatedly gunned down in the streets. Then came the seven-year dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera (1870–1930),⁹⁰ which existed within the framework of the monarchy. Primo de Rivera was ruthless and efficient, though less brutal than his predecessors. Primo de Rivera resigned his office in January 1930, and the king (Alfonso XIII) fled in April 1931 after antimonarchists won victories in a number of local elections. This led directly to the aforementioned establishment of the Second Republic. Among the laws passed by the first Republican parliament was the Agrarian Reform law of 1932, a moderate piece of legislation that satisfied no one. In fact, the landowners offered resistance, stopped paying wages to agricultural workers, and declared “all-out war on the Republic.”⁹¹ Anarchists responded to the crisis with a show of solidarity, “provid[ing] services within the neighbourhood, ranging from procurement of goods to the resolution of personal conflicts between neighbours ... Anarchist culture pervaded worker neighbourhoods.”⁹²

In addition to tensions between the Azaña government and the landowners, relations between the government and the CNT were also very poor. The latter felt that the government was waging war against its members and indeed, by 1933, some 9,000 CNT members were behind bars. The CNT itself had been declared illegal on 8 April 1932 on the pretext that the organization had been taken over by a group of anarchists from the Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI or Iberian Anarchist Federation), a group set up by CNT members in March 1927. In December 1933, the CNT organized a rebellion centered in Aragón and the Rioja region; many villages in those areas proclaimed the establish-

ment of “libertarian communism” (anarchist collectivism) as did also the village of Hospitalet in Barcelona province.⁹³ The Republican government confronted three challenges: land reform, the privileges and influence of the Church, and the army. But the government’s responses did not satisfy either the peasants or the big landowners and their clerical allies. The initial moderate land reform was abandoned, while a parallel proposal to terminate government salaries for clergymen after a transition period of two years was also abandoned. As for the military, a law was passed rewarding retiring officers with promotion to the next rank and retirement at full salary.⁹⁴ In October 1934, the Socialists launched an uprising against the fascist threat; it failed to gather any momentum, except in Asturias, where the uprising began to take on the character of a full-scale social revolution. Army units led by General López de Ochoa (consisting mainly of Moorish and Foreign Legion troops) needed two weeks to suppress the uprising. It was at this point that General Franco, hitherto commandant-general of the Balearic Islands, was brought to Iberia and made the *de facto* chief of the ministry of war.⁹⁵

In the meantime, petty crime had become a serious problem in Barcelona and environs. In the absence of governmental assistance or state-provided healthcare, the unemployed and unskilled were desperate and often stole food and raided pharmacies for medicines. In 1931, about three-quarters of all deaths in that city were due to starvation or malnutrition.⁹⁶ Simultaneously, a tradition of “expropriations” had developed, in which some—but not all—anarchists engaged in bank robbery in order to fund their political activities. Intra-working class crime was a rarity and, thus, both the raids on food shops and pharmacies, and the bank robberies, were justified as legitimate forms of the struggle to survive. Even those workers lucky enough to find employment had to contend with the fact that enterprises’ “profitability was only guaranteed by wages that were often pitched at subsistence levels.”⁹⁷ In such conditions, the anarchist FAI built up a following in those parts of the city where suffering and crime alike were greatest, and anarchists increasingly justified crimes against the well-to-do. As one Barcelona anarchist newspaper put it, “bourgeois society is an organised society of robbers. From the small shopkeeper, through to the little industrialists, right up to the most powerful capitalist consortiums, there is nothing but rob-

bery.”⁹⁸ Needless to say, if the bourgeoisie and the government were robbing the poor, then—it followed—the poor had the right to resist.

This growing mutual sympathy between anarchists and illegals would return like a boomerang soon after the military uprising in July 1936 was put down in Barcelona. At that point, groups of “uncontrollables” (*incontrolats*) made their appearance. Joining the revolutionary patrols known as the *patrullas de control*, the “uncontrollables” were bent on revenge and were responsible for a string of gratuitous acts of violence, including the murder of clergy.⁹⁹

Meanwhile, the eventual fascist insurrection began to be organized already in March 1933, when a group of generals formed the conspiratorial Unión Militar Española. The Union held frequent meetings; the key figures were Generals Franco, Fanjul, Villegas, Manuel Goded Llopis, Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, and Emilio Mola y Vidal, alongside Colonel Juan Yagüe y Blanco. The conspiracy was an open secret. To begin with, civilians on the far right are said to have approached a number of generals, including the aforementioned Franco, Fanjul, and Goded even before the February 1936 elections, urging a preemptive coup. Further, civilian politicians on the left tried to deal with the situation by moving the conspirators to remote posts: in particular, Franco was given command of the garrison in the Canary Islands, from where he easily maintained contact with troops in Spanish Morocco who were loyal to him. Meanwhile, in May 1936, as the political atmosphere was becoming increasingly charged, anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists decided on a radical measure: the creation of an armed militia.¹⁰⁰ The political polarization was increasingly evident. As Robert Kern recalls,

Class lines solidified overnight in many towns, and slogan battles dominated village political life. Conservatives would creep out in the middle of the night to paint “Long live Christ the King” near the homes of militants, while anarchists and socialists dabbed UGT and CNT/FAI acronyms everywhere. Sloganeering was usually followed by gunfights and riots. By July 1936, on the eve of the civil war, a tremendous fund of ill will had built up in many localities. Some of the worst acts were committed in the name of anarchism, but among

anarchists themselves, the feeling of being pursued by uncontrollable pressure from below caused a paralysis of decision-making.¹⁰¹

Then, on 17 July 1936, Franco left the Canary Islands, via French Morocco, and landed in Spanish Morocco; two days later, the rebellion began. The first action taken by the fascist rebels was to capture and execute those generals who were sympathetic to the Republic; this included the military governors of Granada, Zaragoza, La Coruña, Seville, Burgos, Salamanca, and Ceuta. The war ended three years later when, on 1 April 1939, General Franco declared that his troops had achieved all of their military objectives.

THE WAR

In those cities where the workers' movement mobilized, the rebels tended to be defeated. But in those areas where the movement waited for the government to take some action, the rebels usually succeeded in taking control. Part of the reason for the early setbacks was the government's reluctance to distribute arms to civilians.¹⁰² Within a matter of a few days, the rebels controlled about 40 percent of the country, mostly in the north. But the government of the Republic controlled the capital city of Madrid and most of the principal industrial zones. Among the general staff, all but four of the seventeen high-ranking generals remained loyal to the Republic, but only about 25 percent of the army's other 9,000 officers proved loyal. The rest either defected to the rebels or sabotaged the war effort from inside.¹⁰³

At the start of the war, the rebels were able to field some 160,000 troops against 150,000 antifascist troops in militias organized chiefly by the UGT, CNT, and other workers' organizations. But officers on the Republican side were not always reliable and "even in Barcelona ... 40 per cent of the officers were later dismissed as untrustworthy by the Republican authorities."¹⁰⁴ In terms of armaments, the rebels possessed 7,543 pieces of artillery and 248 tanks, while the Republicans held 7,064 pieces of artillery and 267 tanks.¹⁰⁵ Yet the rebels were also actively assisted by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, which provided the rebels

with high-quality armaments.¹⁰⁶ Italy sent some 70,000–75,000 “volunteers” (whose wages were paid by Franco and Mussolini jointly) to help the rebels. Italy also sent in 660 aircraft, about 150 tanks, and 1,000 pieces of artillery. Hitler, fearful that the communists might emerge as the dominant force in the Republic,¹⁰⁷ sent some 5,000 troops in support of the rebels, as well as 600 aircraft, 200 tanks, and 1,000 pieces of artillery. The Germans sustained about 300 casualties in Spain, while Italy’s war dead totaled more than 4,000.¹⁰⁸ As payment for German aid, Hitler was obtaining quantities of iron ore, pyrite, mercury, and other minerals from rebel-held areas—metals needed for the German rearmament program.¹⁰⁹

In response, the Soviet Union came to the rescue of the Republic, sending some 1,000 aircraft (with pilots), about 900 tanks, and 1,550 artillery pieces, as well as 2,000 military personnel and political commissars to carry out indoctrination. The Soviet also sent in about twenty to forty NKVD agents, among other things to liquidate activists of the anti-Stalinist POUM, who were among the supporters of the Republic.¹¹⁰ France sent some 300 aircraft to help the Republic, but Britain maintained a formal neutrality, declining to assist either side, and even pressured France to terminate its aid to the Republic. A four-man delegation that included anarchists José Peirats and Ramón Bou went to Paris in November 1936, in an effort to purchase weaponry. The French government decided to respect the Non-Intervention Treaty, in spite of German and Italian involvement in the war on the side of Francoist rebels. This forced the delegates to turn to the black market, where they were able to procure a number of old rifles which had been used in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71.¹¹¹ The result, thus, as Francisco Romero Salvadó has noted, is that “Fascist aid, together with British acquiescence and French paralysis, altered dramatically the course of the civil war.”¹¹² The Republic was, however, further reinforced by the International Brigades, involving some 32,000 volunteers from at least fifty-three countries. The brigades were recruited through local communist parties and more than half of those who volunteered were communists; about 80 percent of the total were of working class origin. American volunteers generally joined the Lincoln Battalion or the Washington Battalion within the XV International Brigade, as well as the John Brown Anti-

Aircraft Battery. Collectively, these three units came to be called, unofficially, the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

Although the International Brigades suffered high casualties and did not materially alter the course of the war, they contributed to making the struggle in Spain an international cause célèbre. Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961), for example, wrote a play, *The Fifth Column* and four short stories about the war.¹¹³ George Orwell (1903–50) decided to see for himself what was going on in Catalonia, where the anarchists were particularly strong. The result was his *Homage to Catalonia*. As he recorded there, at the time of his arrival

The Anarchists were still in virtual control of Catalonia and the revolution was still in full swing ... It was the first time that I had ever been in a town where the working class was in the saddle. Practically every building of any size had been seized by the workers and was draped with red flags or with the red and black flag of the Anarchists; ... almost every church had been gutted and its images burnt. Churches here and there were being systematically demolished by gangs of workmen ... Servile and even ceremonial forms of speech had temporarily disappeared. Nobody said “Señor” or “Don” or even “usted”; everyone called everyone else “Comrade” or “Thou,” and said “Salud!” instead of “Buenos dias.”¹¹⁴

In folklore, it has come down to us that the anarchists and communists were anticlerical and that Franco and his forces stepped forward to defend the Church from the secular leftists. This is, however, an oversimplification fostered by Franquist propaganda. To begin with, there were clergy who sympathized with and supported the Republic, and, while the majority of bishops supported the rebels, the bishop of Tarragona supported the Republic, rejecting the antidemocratic attitude of Franco’s side.¹¹⁵ Nor were Franco’s forces so clearly on the side of the Vatican; indeed, the Spanish Falange was gravitating in the direction of establishing a national church, independent of the Vatican.¹¹⁶ Both sides killed clergy, and the Vatican maintained a neutrality in the war, despite Franco’s repeated claims to be the Church’s best friend in Spain, and the Falangists, in turn, criticized the papacy for remaining aloof. It was only

on 16 April 1938 that the Vatican finally agreed to establish full diplomatic relations with Franco's government.

Many intellectuals in Europe and the United States took the side of the Republic, but Catholics tended to support the rebels. The widespread burning of churches in May 1931 provided grist for the rebels, who cited attacks on the clergy and on churches as a justification for their rebellion. However, as Andy Durgan has noted, recent scholarly research has shown that rebel propaganda greatly exaggerated the amount of church property which had been destroyed prior to their uprising and that no clergy had been killed in the months immediately preceding the outbreak of the war.¹¹⁷ All the same, the Catholic Church had been firmly associated, in people's minds, with the hated monarchy and with socio-political conservatism and, insofar as the Church was vocal about its support for Franco, leftist anticlericalism and general hostility to the Church only deepened after July 1936.

RIVAL VISIONS II: THE ANARCHISTS AND THE FASCISTS

The Republican side was, in fact, divided, with the government deeply suspicious of its anarchist and communist supporters, hostile to both the anti-Stalinists of the POUM and to the anarchists. The POUM has repeatedly been characterized as Trotskyist or quasi-Trotskyist, but Trotsky himself repudiated the organization, suggesting that it contented itself with "theoretical avowals" and that it refused to organize cells within the CNT. According to Trotsky, the (only) reason why the Stalinists called the POUM "Trotskyist" was that, like himself, it championed the formula of *permanent revolution*.¹¹⁸ At the heart of the tension between the various supporters of the Republic was the fact that those had different agendas: the democrats wanted to preserve the Republic more or less along the lines of what it had been; the socialists and POUM wanted to preserve the Republic but push it leftward; the communists loyal to Stalin were driven by hostility to Franco's forces but seemed more concerned about liquidating the POUMists (their supposed allies against Franco) and undermining the anarchists; and the anarchists were hoping for nothing less than social revolution, having little to guide

them besides the written and oral legacy left by Bakunin, Proudhon, Kropotkin, and Malatesta, and, in the countryside at least, memories of precapitalist economic relations.¹¹⁹ But the anarchists themselves were divided. Some anarchists, associated with Ángel Pestaña, stressed economic issues, favored reformist solutions, and emphasized legal recognition of the CNT. Pestaña and his adherents had little faith that anarchism could actually be realized and looked to negotiate solutions with the government.¹²⁰ A second group, led by Joan Peiró, was also reformist in orientation, but retained hope for the eventual establishment of anarchist relations. The third group had grown up around the idealistic and committed anarchist, Buenaventura Durruti (1896–1936),¹²¹ and was opposed to any collaboration with government and thus opposed reformist approaches. The existence of reformist currents undermined the unity of the CNT.

Bakunin's Direct Influence

It is possible to trace a direct translation of Bakunin's ideas to Spain. Bakunin, for example, repeatedly insisted that "the anarchist social revolution ... arises spontaneously within the people" and that it must involve, as already mentioned, "the free and independent organization of all the units and parts of the community and their voluntary federation from below upwards, not by the orders of any authority, even an elected one."¹²² If, thus, there were to be no power-holders or governing body in the anarchist collective¹²³—let alone a dictatorship of the proletariat or of any other kind—then it followed that it was entirely inappropriate for anarchist activists to prepare plans of any kind or even to prescribe specific formulae to people. What "the friends of the people" could do, according to Bakunin, was to urge working people to take matters into their own hands and effect, whether quickly or more gradually, a "radical transformation of their economic life."¹²⁴

Following Bakunin's lead, Durruti denied any ambition to lead or to take power. Reflecting on the failed anarchist insurrection of 1933, Durruti wrote that "Those who say that we wanted to take power and impose a dictatorship are liars. Our revolutionary convictions repudiate such

a goal. We want a revolution for the people and by the people because proletarian liberation is impossible otherwise.”¹²⁵ Two years earlier, Durruti had protested his “absolutely apolitical” orientation, even while urging—this, at a time when the Republic was only a few months old—that anarchists should carry out revolution “as soon as possible.”¹²⁶ His fellow anarchist García Oliver drew the inevitable Bakuninist conclusion in urging,

After the revolution, the workers must have the freedom to live according to their needs and society will satisfy those needs, according to its economic capacities.

No preparation is necessary for this. The only thing required is that today’s revolutionaries defend the working class sincerely and don’t try to become little tyrants.¹²⁷

This principled anarchist aversion to taking power or assuming any responsibility for making concrete preparations, combined with a deep faith in the readiness of the working class to take the initiative, resulted in FAI and other radicals declining to formulate a clear program.¹²⁸

Given the ideas that they had assimilated in the *ateneus* and through other means, workers did in fact take the initiative, above all in Catalonia. As Hugh Thomas has recorded, “many peasants learned to read under anarchist instruction and they were likely to believe implicitly much of what they read in the ill-printed tracts by Bakunin and Proudhon.”¹²⁹ Bakunin’s ideas had been transmitted via Durruti and García Oliver to the peasants, who now seized the initiative, as if reading from a Bakuninist script.

Bakunin had made his support for the collectivization of farmland and industry alike well known. “Cooperation in all its forms is undeniably a rational and just mode of future production,” he had written in his *Statism and Anarchy*. “But for it to achieve its objective—liberation of all the workers and their full compensation and satisfaction—all forms of land and capital must become collective property.”¹³⁰ Now, as the Civil War barely began, Durruti took up this Bakuninist theme and urged a group of peasants: “Have you organized your collective? Don’t wait any longer. Occupy the land. Organize yourselves without bosses or

parasites among you. If you don't do that, there's no reason for us to keep going forward. We have to create a new world, different from the one that we're destroying."¹³¹ In fact, many peasants were more than ready to adopt collective forms of agricultural organization. Now, in many parts of the south of Spain, villages spontaneously collectivized land, convinced that there was a new age dawning. In Madrid, workers' committees were formed to oversee the newly established industrial collectives and cooperatives in the service sector. In eastern Aragon, Republican institutions collapsed; in that context, collectivization served to restore the local markets. Given the prevailing conditions, even those small farmers who would have preferred to hold onto their land, had there been peace, considered it safer to join a collective.¹³² And above all, Catalonia was the center both of CNT-FAI strength and of anarchist-inspired collectivization. Catalan workers took control not only of many factories and workshops but also of railways and all public transport, which now functioned more efficiently than previously. Workers' control was also established over public services, including telephone service, gas, and electricity, and these were functioning in a normal way within two days of the defeat of rebel forces commanded by General Goded.¹³³ Surveying the new situation created by the establishment of workers' control in the factories, Mariano Vázquez expressed satisfaction: "The grassroots continue to make the decisions. The leading comrades are still workers in their factories and their assemblies oversee their activities."¹³⁴

The form which anarchism took was the formation of agrarian and industrial collectives, in which workers shared in the management and profits. According to Gaston Leval, a French writer, about 3 million people (18% of the total agrarian population) were living in collectives by 1937; there were 500 collectives in the Levante, 400 in Aragón, 230 in parts of Castile, and throughout Andalusia. In almost all of the collectivized villages, money was abolished and goods were distributed on an egalitarian basis.¹³⁵ Friends of Durruti, an association set up in 1937 (to honor the fallen anarchist, Buenaventura Durruti Dumange, who had died in November 1936), offered a different estimate, suggesting that as many as 5–7 million persons may have participated in agricultural collectives, with additional thousands involved in workers' control of industrial plants.¹³⁶

The Role of the CNT in Collectivization

Among Spanish anarchists, the kind of society that they hoped to create was commonly identified as “libertarian communism.” Isaac Puente, one of the organizers of the uprising in Aragón in December 1933, explained the term in a pamphlet first published in 1932 by CNT: “The very bringing together of the two terms (communism and libertarian) is indicative in itself of the fusion of two ideas: one of them is collectivist, tending to bring about harmony in the whole through the contributions and cooperation of individuals, without undermining their independence in any way; while the other is individualist, seeking to reassure the individual that his independence will be respected.”¹³⁷ Puente pointedly denied that society stands in need of administrative power or that it requires armed police to keep order; in his view, societies are held together by natural sociability and by the need and instinct for mutual aid. The key to making libertarian communism operative, according to Puente, was to establish common (social) ownership of the means and tools of production and of the products of labor—and, of course, to abolish the state. Spain’s anarchists put these principles into action.

As early as May 1936, the CNT had held a congress in Zaragoza, adopting a resolution calling for expropriation without payment of all land in excess of fifty hectares; confiscation of cattle, working tools, machinery, and seeds of expropriated landlords; transfer of all goods to peasant syndicates; the suppression of rent; and reduction of the work day and equalization of wages. The outbreak of war accelerated the social revolution, as peasants decided to put into practice the ideas they had assimilated in the course of the preceding decades. Land was confiscated forcibly and turned over to peasant unions, which in turn converted them into agricultural collectives. Anarchist militias played a prominent role in this process. For example, in southern Aragón, the Durruti Column passed through one village, killing the priest, his most loyal devotees, the lawyer and his son, and a number of wealthy peasants; the local revolutionary committee then established control. Durruti, a courageous commander of anarchist forces, explained: “We are waging the war and making the Revolution at the same time. The revolutionary measures in the rear are not taken merely in Barcelona; they extend from

there right up to the firing line. Every village we conquer begins to develop along revolutionary lines.”¹³⁸

Many of the peasants joined the collectives voluntarily, even happily, but others were forced to join. Some peasants, on the other hand, were allowed to opt out of the collectivist experiment and to farm privately. Those peasants who declined to join the collectives (dubbed “individualists”) were respected—consistent with the anarchist championing of human freedom—provided that they worked the land using only the labor of their own families, which is to say without wage labor. After the local revolutionary committee seized the property of large landowners, an assembly of workers, involving the entire village, would apportion the confiscated land between the collectivists and the individualists.¹³⁹ But the expropriated landowners were, inevitably, determined to end the experiment in libertarian communism and get their land back.

The collectives typically set up cooperatives to distribute food. In some villages, vouchers were introduced in lieu of money and could be exchanged for foodstuffs and other commodities. Although money did not entirely disappear, the collectives bartered among themselves for some transactions, and some collectives, such as Granadella, stopped paying taxes to the state, even though the anarchists were nominally defending the Republican state. The collective at Graus, by contrast, continued to pay its taxes, since the government was fighting the fascist rebels. By contrast, Alcolea de Cinca, while refusing to pay taxes, supplied troops at the front with agricultural produce.

Each collective was divided into work groups, typically consisting of five to ten members; each work group was assigned a plot of land and was then responsible for cultivating that land. Each work group also elected a delegate who would represent the views of the group at meetings of the collective council. A management committee supervised the work of the groups and took responsibility to purchase materials needed and to arrange for exchanges of goods with other collectives. The management committee also was responsible for the construction and maintenance of schools and for other public works. The organization of the collective gave its members a sense of efficacy and production increased tangibly in the collectives—with harvests, in some cases,

increasing five times over, from their prerevolutionary levels.¹⁴⁰ The government in Madrid recognized some 2,213 of these collectives but there were many collectives that did not bother to seek recognition and, accordingly, were not recognized.¹⁴¹

By 1937, there were about 1,500 rural collectives, worked by 1.5 million people.¹⁴² Collectivization was also put into practice in some cities, where about 40 percent of the economy was collectivized. In Barcelona, about 80 percent of industry and services were collectivized. Most of the expropriations were carried out spontaneously in the first days after the uprising. In both the cities and the countryside, there were communal mess halls where people took their meals. The collectives also operated free clinics and cultural centers for their members. The anarchist experiment in the countryside represented a dramatic break with the past and has been judged to have been “the only solid and constructive achievement” of the war years.¹⁴³

In Asturias, syndical councils had seized control of nearly all mining and industrial operations, but did not undertake full collectivization. One of the deterrents to full-scale collectivization was the presence of significant foreign investment in the industry of Asturias. The only exception to this general rule against full collectivization was the fishing industry in Gijón, which was fully collectivized.¹⁴⁴

In Aragón, about 70 percent of the peasants had been organized into 450 collectives within six months of the revolution, according to CNT spokespersons, although Stanley Payne suggests that that figure is an exaggeration.¹⁴⁵ In Catalonia, change in the agricultural sector was less radical than in eastern Aragón or elsewhere for that matter, but the transformation of the industrial sector was all the more radical. The Generalitat (the regional government of Catalonia) undertook measures to secure its authority over key facilities related to war production, but most of these measures came at the request of the factory committees which, for various reasons, were finding it expedient to bring the government into the picture. By October 1936, the government controlled 435 factories in Catalonia, of which 360 were located in Barcelona. In the meantime, the Generalitat also set up a War Industries Commission which, by mid-September, had assumed control of twenty-four factories in the greater Barcelona area; but autumn 1937, it had 500 factories under

its supervision, employing more than 50,000 workers.¹⁴⁶ On the other hand, the CNT controlled Catalonia's border with France and dominated its shipping facilities for most of the first year of the campaign, setting up dozens of export cooperatives.

Anarchist thinking was also reflected in the use to which they put their forced labor camps. As the anarchists saw it, forced labor could have a redemptive effect on incarcerated "fascists" and even transform them into antifascists.¹⁴⁷ (For that matter, Francoist concentration camps were also intended to reeducate detainees and make them suitable for the new Spain Franco intended to build.¹⁴⁸)

The POUM applauded what it called "a proletarian revolution more profound than the Russian revolution itself,"¹⁴⁹ but hoped that the social revolution would culminate in the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat—a goal entirely antithetical to the principles and objectives of the anarchists. Nonetheless, the POUM, which, Trotsky notwithstanding, may have owed something to Trotsky's influence,¹⁵⁰ enunciated principles which seemed to echo anarchist thinking. An example is a statement by Andrés Nin (1892–1937), one of the leaders of the POUM, at the beginning of August 1936: "The government does not exist. We are collaborating with them, but they can do no more than sanction whatever is done by the masses."¹⁵¹

At the time that hostilities began, the FAI was largely subordinated to the CNT. The FAI's program was quintessentially Bakuninist and embraced the "abolition of classes, complete economic and social equality, abolition of private property and inheritance, everybody's right to a proportional share of what is produced, collective ownership of the earth and tools by associations of producers, [the] universal right to education ... and the transformation of political and authoritarian States into the simple administration of public services."¹⁵² Indeed, the FAI and the CNT were not rivals; on the contrary, almost all the members of the FAI also joined the CNT, and many of them assumed positions of responsibility within the CNT. From July 1936, the two were closely linked and typically referred to as the CNT-FAI. Thus, the Casa CNT-FAI was the headquarters of anarcho-syndicalism in Barcelona; the "Casa" housed the CNT-FAI Offices of Information and Publicity, the CNT-FAI radio

station, the CNT-FAI School for Activists, and the editorial office of the CNT-FAI Bulletin.¹⁵³

In Catalonia and Aragón, the anarchists were sufficiently strong that they could have seized power. Some radicals demanded that they do so and establish an “anarchist dictatorship”. This would, of course, have involved a fundamental self-contradiction and was, accordingly, rejected. At the same time, the anarchists considered it to be the highest priority to defeat the fascist insurrection and therefore came to an agreement, on 21 July 1936, that they would enter the government of Catalonia, despite Durruti’s judgment that “the battle against fascism isn’t the work of the government, but [of] the Spanish proletariat.”¹⁵⁴ Yet Durruti himself had rejected the idea of organizing a “revolutionary” army.¹⁵⁵ Less than six weeks later, four leading figures in the CNT entered the Republican government under Prime Minister Francisco Largo Caballero, remaining for almost nine months. From the suppression of the fascist insurrection in Catalonia on 19–20 July 1936 until early December, the CNT-FAI was the dominant force in that region. The CNT-FAI specifically dominated the Central Committee of the Antifascist Militias, which was the effective government in the region, although the Generalidad de Catalonia, headed by President Lluís Companys (1882–1940), remained in existence. In fact, the anarchists even entered into the government of the Generalidad in late September 1936. It was the Central Committee of the Antifascist Militias which assumed major responsibility for the maintenance of public order, making use of the so-called *patrullas de control* (control patrols), organized by trade unions and political groups. It was this position of predominance that enabled the anarchists to launch their social revolution which, if successful, would have transformed Spain.

In early July 1937, thus, the FAI adopted a set of “circumstantial” principles, declaring their commitment to eradicate vestiges of the bourgeois way of life but, at the same time, urging anarchists to participate in the existing public institutions to the extent that they could be used to advance the social revolution. But there continued to be uncertainty and disagreements about the decision to join the government, and inevitably, the government reciprocated the ambivalence. Hence, for example, when the CNT-FAI requested weapons, so that its members

could fight against the fascists, the government of Catalonia refused, on the pretext that it did not have any weapons. When the workers, who needed a bare minimum of 1,000 firearms, helped themselves to about 200 rifles and other materiel from the battleships *Marques de Camillas* and *Magallenes*, the chief of police demanded that the weapons be returned and sent police to attack the anarchist patrols. The result was that the CNT-FAI militias, who had already organized the defense of Barcelona from the rebels, ended up having to defend themselves from the police, who were supposedly on the same side.¹⁵⁶ And, as already indicated, there were government offensives against the collectives in the summer of 1937. The first, directed against the Aragón collectives, came in June 1937; the government troops, commanded by communists, confiscated everything of value that was movable and smashed the rest. A second, even larger offensive came in July–August 1937.

ANARCHISM AND ANTICLERICALISM

Bakunin's antipathy to Churches is well known. In his view, "the Church is a kind of celestial tavern, just as the tavern is a sort of celestial Church on earth. In Church and tavern alike [people] forget, at least momentarily, their hunger, their oppression, and their humiliation, and they try to dull the memory of their daily afflictions, in the one with mindless faith and in the other with wine. One form of intoxication is as good as the other."¹⁵⁷ For Bakunin, then, the anarchists' task was to help people sober up, so that they could keep their oppression and humiliation in clear view. With that, Bakunin was convinced, people would understand that, in order to end their oppression and their humiliation, they would have to destroy both the state and the Church.

The widespread anticlericalism in the south of Spain and increasingly also in Catalonia underlay the aforementioned rash of church burnings between February and July 1936. The fascist/military insurrection, coupled with the Church's September 1936 endorsement of the fascists' so-called crusade, only intensified hatred of the Church. But the endorsement of September 1936 was only a preliminary statement. A fuller endorsement came on 1 July 1937, when the Spanish bishops collectively

declared that the insurgency was “a ‘civic-military’ rising on the part of the healthiest and best qualified civilian elements of the nation as well as of part of the army.”¹⁵⁸ Only five bishops refused to sign the collective letter—among them, Bishop Mateo Múgica Urrestarazu of Vitoria and Archbishop Francisco Cardinal Vidal y Barraquer of Tarragona.

Given this combination of a legacy of Church association with people’s oppressors, the anarchist analysis, and now the Church’s explicit support for the fascist rebels, it was perhaps inevitable that violence only intensified after July 1936. There was an explosion of anticlerical violence in the first months after the start of the war and, by the time the rebels had succeeded in crushing the Republic, some 7,000 mostly male clergy had been killed, the majority—but not all—in the Republic-controlled zone.¹⁵⁹ The anticlerical violence served to reinforce the conservative consensus to back the rebels, but the rebels also murdered clergy; they did so when they suspected the clergy concerned of being sympathetic to the Republic. One example comes from the province of Guipúzcoa where rebel forces executed sixteen Basque priests for their apparent pro-Republic sympathies and support for the Basque nationalist agenda. Other Catholic priests were executed by rebels in other parts of Spain.¹⁶⁰

The Fascist Vision

To characterize Francisco Franco as a fascist is not to suggest that his politics was identical to that of either Hitler or Mussolini. But he subscribed to at least some of the fascist minima, including his hatred of both liberalism and communism, his contempt for individual rights, his rejection of the rule of law in favor of his own personal rule, his postwar creation of a one-party system under his control, his rejection of freedom of religion and freedom of speech (even going so far as to ban the use of the Catalan language in public), and his adoption of some of the trappings of archetypal fascism, including the title he took for himself (*caudillo*, the Spanish equivalent of *Führer*) and the stiff-arm salute. Franco’s aspiration was “to (re)build a homogeneous/monolithic and hierarchised society,”¹⁶¹ in which the Spanish people would be indoctrinated into a fascist version of traditional morality. To drive forward “the

process of national reordering,” the instrumentalization of an outgroup proved to be a crucial ingredient in fascist propaganda and here “the Spanish working classes became what the Jews were to that other, more notoriously renowned Volksgemeinschaft.”¹⁶²

Francoist propaganda, both during the Civil War and after, promoted the idea of two rival Spains—one Catholic, conservative, respectful of traditions, and obedient, and the other atheist, liberal or communist, disrespectful of traditions, and rebellious. Indeed, in Francoist propaganda, the defenders of the Republic were cast as *rebels*, while the rebels presented themselves as *defenders* of the old order. Yet Franco’s strategy involved a frontal assault on innocence: this was accomplished by the terror, which made its practitioners complicit in the emergence of the new social order.¹⁶³

ANARCHISM, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY

Insofar as anarchist ideal is the free man (or woman) who “stands by himself, and rests upon his own understanding,”¹⁶⁴ living in conditions of full equality, one might expect that anarchists would inevitably embrace the dual cause of gender equality and full equality for homosexuality with enthusiasm. To be sure, there were German anarchists, such as Robert Reitzel (1849–98), Senna Hoy (1882–1914), and Erich Mühsam (1878–1934) who spoke out in defense of homosexuality. Already in 1903, Mühsam brought out a book on homosexuality, arguing that homosexuality was inborn, not chosen; in his view, government prohibition or regulation in any form of homosexuality was unacceptable.¹⁶⁵ The following year, Hoy published an article in which he argued that “no one has the right to intrude in the private matters of another, to meddle in another’s personal views and orientations, and that ultimately it is no one’s business what two freely consenting adults do in their homes.”¹⁶⁶

But Spanish society had been shaped by conservative Catholicism, the cult of machismo, and a deep-rooted fear among men of being viewed as homosexuals.¹⁶⁷ Thus, although there were debates about “free love” in Catalonia, encouraging women and men to enter into nonmonoga-

mous relationships as they saw fit, this license was limited to heterosexual liaisons. The anarchist publication *Revista Blanca* took up this subject in 1935, addressing the question “What is there to be said about those comrades who themselves are anarchists and who associated with invert[s] [i.e., homosexuals]?” The paper’s response was “They cannot be viewed as men if that ‘associate’ means anything apart from speaking to or saluting sexual degenerates. If you are an anarchist, that means that you are more morally upright and physically strong than the average man. And he who likes invert[s] is no real man, and is therefore no real anarchist.”¹⁶⁸

Where gender equality was concerned, it might seem, at first glance, that the Spanish anarchist experiment made more strides. Certainly, anarchists embraced the cause of gender equality.¹⁶⁹ In most anarchist communities, marriage was abolished and replaced with the concept of a free union based on mutual trust, though this often looked much the same as conventional marriage. Women were actively involved in the anarchist social revolution and fought side by side with the men to defend their communities and their revolution, while the government of the Republic legalized abortion and set up refuges open to all women.¹⁷⁰ There was also an anarchist women’s group—*Mujeres Libres* (Free Women)—and anarchist newspapers increasingly took note of women’s activities, organizations, and heroism in battle. But patriarchal patterns of thought continued also on the anarchist collectives, where women were, as a matter of routine, paid less than men for equal work; in addition, some collectives insisted that women and men eat in separate dining halls. The *Mujeres Libres* were convinced that the social revolution would, in running its course, bring about the liberation and full equality of the members of their sex. But anarchist women also believed, as women in other revolutionary situations have often believed, that their own liberation could be postponed until the revolution had been secured, although it should be noted that the *Mujeres Libres* did challenge the traditional division of labor and assignment of roles.¹⁷¹ Moreover, as Temma Kaplan notes, “in spite of their awareness of the exploitation of women in capitalist society, [the Spanish anarchists] did not develop a programme to prevent similar exploitation in revolutionary society.” She accordingly concludes that “There is no reason to believe that the

condition of Spanish women would have been fundamentally changed if the anarchists had won the war.”¹⁷² Still, Kaplan’s judgment remains in the realm of speculation against which one may note that some successful leftist parties—specifically the Yugoslav and Albanian communist parties—adopted policies which succeeded at least in rolling back some traditional patriarchal practices and in mobilizing more women into political roles.¹⁷³

ANARCHISTS IN THE GOVERNMENT

Already on 27 July 1936, the communist newspaper *Mundo Obrero* denounced the forcible collectivization which had been effected by the CNT in the northeast part of the country. On 4 September, when Largo Caballero was named prime minister, the communists entered his cabinet, obtaining three posts—among these, the post of minister of agriculture.¹⁷⁴ Indalecio Prieto Tuero (1883–1962), a socialist, became minister of the Air Force and Navy. The FAI and CNT were also invited to join the government, but initially declined. When they finally agreed to join the government, Juan García Oliver became Minister of Justice (in which position he ordered all criminal dossiers destroyed), Diego Abad de Santillán became Minister of the Economy, and Federica Montseny became Minister of Health. As a by-product of the change in anarchist policy, an agreement between the UGT and the CNT was signed on 22 October 1936. In a striking passage of this document, the signatory parties agreed to strive for “the collectivization of production, that is expropriation without compensation of the capitalists and the transfer of private property to the Community.”¹⁷⁵ Meanwhile, on 1 October 1936, the first Soviet consul general, Vladimir Antonov-Ovsenko, arrived in Barcelona. A former Trotskyist, he arrived with the assignment to strengthen the PSUC, to weaken and destroy the revolutionary POUM, and to undermine the anarchists.¹⁷⁶ Soon after his arrival, the PSUC gained in strength in Catalonia and, in mid-November 1936, launched a violent attack on the POUM, which had functioned as an ally of the anarchists. The anarchists failed to understand the situation and chose to view the PSUC-POUM rivalry as a family quarrel

between Marxists rather than as something that could threaten their own interests. The anarchists also failed to realize that the chief interest of the communists was to prevent the development of an alternative revolutionary model on the left.

The communists succeeded in ingratiating themselves with the socialists and the anarchists in the early months of the Caballero government, and gave their full support to the government, using their influence “to bring about Caballero’s control over the military and economic life of the country.”¹⁷⁷ Caballero reciprocated by allowing the communists to extend their control over the Socialist Youth organization and to obtain key positions in the Ministry of Defense and in the Army. The capture of the Socialist Youth organization was viewed by the communists as a first step toward the eventual unification of the Socialist and Communist parties. The communists also infiltrated the Socialist trade unions and exploited the rift which was developing between Caballero and Prieto to their own advantage.¹⁷⁸

Where the anarchists are concerned, the communists proceeded cautiously. They were, of course, opposed to the anarchists’ alternative model but understood that the Nationalist rebels were the immediate threat and, in any event, were wary, at that point in time, of provoking antagonism on the part of the anarchists. As a result, as David Cattell has noted, “the Communist policy was very ambivalent—on the one hand opposing the policies of revolution carried out by the Anarchists and on the other hand striving for closer cooperation with them.”¹⁷⁹ However, in what was a hint of things to come, the communists began to distinguish between anarchist leaders of whom they approved and anarchist leaders of whom they did not approve. Soon the communists were applying pressure to push the anarchists out of high office.

The entry of some of their number into the government divided the anarchists. Those favoring collaboration with the government argued that, if the rebels won, there would be no hope at all for the Libertarian revolution, and accordingly that the revolution should be slowed down and a regular army established. The majority of anarchist leaders agreed with this strategy, but among the anarchist rank and file there were many who viewed the entry into the government as a fundamental betrayal of the principles for which anarchists stood. The decision by

some anarchists to enter first the regional government in Catalonia in September 1936 and then the central government in Madrid two months later showed that they were putting their anarchism on the “back burner”: By opting for collaboration, as Ricardo Sanz put it, the libertarian movement “renounced everything, absolutely everything.”¹⁸⁰ Nor did this process of renunciation stop at participation in the government. On the contrary, as Chris Ealham has related,

In the course of this renunciation, to minimise dissent from below, the higher committees of the CNT-FAI were bureaucratised, converting the movement into a “top-down” organisation ... While the FAI became just another political party, according to Camilo Berneri, an Italian anarchist exiled in Barcelona, there was “a Bolshevisation process inside the CNT,” as leaders exerted new control over the base and eroded internal democracy. For instance, breaking with the norms of the organisation, the leadership now convened assemblies and drew up the agenda, which was not circulated in advance as had occurred before the war. As the CNT-FAI [was] drawn into high politics, for the first time in its history it attracted careerists.¹⁸¹

With this, the anarchist movement became increasingly diluted. But for the anarchists who held onto the movement’s original vision, participation in government represented not only collusion in the annihilation of the freedom, which people should enjoy to organize their lives and their society according to their needs and wishes, but also the subversion of that principle of solidarity which the anarchists prized and which was expressed—when the state retreated—by relations of mutual aid and interdependence. Alejandro Gilabert, an FAI spokesman, expressed his dismay by writing, “Those comrades who believe that the CNT represents anarchism are sorely mistaken. The CNT is a mass organization which defends the moral and economic interests of the workers, but it is not a specifically anarchist organization, though its objective is Libertarian Communism. Let it be said once and for all, it is the FAI which represents anarchism.”¹⁸²

In March 1937, in token of this resistance to collaboration with the government, Jaime Balius, Félix Martínez, and Pablo Ruiz established

the so-called Amigos de Durruti (Friends of Durruti), named for the anarchist hero who had been killed the previous year. The Amigos, consisting of more radical elements of the FAI and some Trotskyists, refused to conform to CNT-FAI policy and, true to their idol, demanded a more radical approach.¹⁸³ The Amigos launched a newspaper, *El Amigo del Pueblo* (The Friend of the People) which “circulated secretly in April and early May 1937, and illegally thereafter until November 1937, when it was suppressed.”¹⁸⁴ Its first issue denounced the CNT for having joined the Popular Front government (in violation of anarchists’ antigovernment principles).

A turning point for the Stalinists of the PSUC came in May 1937 when open fighting broke out on the streets of Barcelona and other Catalan cities. The police commissioner declared that the anarchists were rebelling against legal authority. That was not the case, however. As Agustín Guillamón has noted, “what triggered the fighting was the storming of the [worker-controlled] Telephone Exchange by Generalidad security troops ... [as] part and parcel of the Companys’ government’s ongoing intent to recover, bit by bit, the powers which the ‘irregular’ situation of a workers’ uprising” had taken from it.¹⁸⁵ The government declared a state of emergency, sending armed police throughout the city, even as CNT officials tried to broker a truce. Barricades went up in the Sans and Hostafranchs districts and, in the morning of 4 May, both sides started sniping at each other. The PSUC erected a barricade a few hundred meters from the headquarters of the CNT/FIA on Via Durruti, placing it under siege. The following day, after anarchists in the Coll district occupied a military installation, Catalan soldiers joined the PSUC in the siege of CNT/FIA headquarters. As the crisis continued, the 20 October 1937 issue of *El Amigo del Pueblo* carried a manifesto, demanding the following:

1. Establishment of a Revolutionary Junta.
2. All economic power to the unions.
3. Socialization of production and consumption.
4. Introduction of the producer’s cart.
5. Mobilization of the entire population.
6. Purging of the rearguard [the reformists].
7. Workers’ control of the army.

8. The family wage. Abolition of all privileges.
9. Free [services in the] municipality. Public order to be placed in workers' hands.
10. Rationing of consumption across the board.¹⁸⁶

On 3 May 1937, the CNT-FAI and the POUM had thought that the moment had come to seize power. But, by this point, the CNT was marred by "the absence of internal discussion, a hierarchical structure, and a breaking off of channels of communication between the leaders and the syndicalist base."¹⁸⁷ To be sure, the revolutionaries were at first in a strong position in Barcelona as well as in much of Catalonia, but, as Ealham reports, "their mobilisations lacked coordination, so, while anarchist radicals and poumistas seized the streets and controlled working-class neighbourhoods, there was no organ capable of channeling the revolutionary energies against the state."¹⁸⁸ It was not due to literal-minded fidelity to Bakunin's warnings against "leaderism" but rather to a combination of naïve trust in Popular Front collaboration, lack of imagination, and lack of courage that the CNT-FAI leaders chose to stay aloof from the May uprising, finally brokering a compromise that saw the dismantlement of the barricades. When the dust had finally settled, the CNT-FAI and the POUM were to be the big losers in the May 1937 crisis.¹⁸⁹

Meanwhile, the Stalinists were dismayed at Largo Caballero's legalization of the council of Aragón as well as at the assistance he provided to workers' collectives in several regions.¹⁹⁰ In July 1937, they succeeded in removing him as prime minister, replacing him with a "fellow traveler," Juan Negrín (1892–1956), to effect the outlawing of the POUM, and to mount "a massive campaign of intimidation, censorship, persecution, and even murder of the anarchists, Caballero Socialists, and all other persons who stood in the way of their complete domination of Republican Spain."¹⁹¹ PSUC militias sacked the headquarters of the CNT and the Libertarian Youth, arresting eight leading figures in these organizations. PSUC militias also participated in actions against anarchist collectivized firms, dissolving them. Thus, in a leaflet distributed on 5 May 1937, while the fighting was still in progress, the Amigos had written, "Workers, together with us, demand: A revolutionary leader-

ship, punishment of the guilty, disarming of all the armed groups which participated in the aggression; [and] the dissolution of the political parties which have risen against the working class. We will not cede the streets: revolution above all!"¹⁹² The leaflets and demands of the Amigos were, however, immediately repudiated by the national committee of the CNT as "provocations" and the Amigos were subsequently expelled from that body.

In or around November 1937, Jaime Balius (1904–80), the publisher of *El Amigo del Pueblo*, began work on the pamphlet, *Hacia una nueva revolución* (Toward a New Revolution), published by the Friends of Durruti in January 1938. It is clear from the text that Balius had become convinced, by the end of 1937, that, whatever might come of the war against the fascists, the anarchist revolution was lost. In his view,

When an organization's whole existence has been spent preaching revolution, it has an obligation to act whenever a favorable set of circumstances arises. And in July [1936] the occasion did present itself. The CNT ought to have leapt into the driver's seat in the country, delivering a coup de grace to all that is outmoded and archaic. In this way, we would have won the war and saved the revolution.

But it did the opposite. It collaborated with the bourgeoisie in [managing] the affairs of the state, precisely when the State was crumbling away on all sides. It bolstered up Companys and company. It breathed a lungful of oxygen into an anemic, terror-stricken bourgeoisie. One of the most direct reasons why the revolution has been asphyxiated and the CNT displaced, is that it behaved like a minority group, even though it had a majority in the streets.¹⁹³

Further, rejecting Bakunin's idea that anarchist visionaries should do no more than educate and inspire workers to seize power, Balius now realized that revolutionary leadership was "indispensable" if social revolution was to have a chance of success.¹⁹⁴ Reflecting on Balius's analysis, Guilamón concluded that all true revolutions are and can only be totalitarian, indeed that revolutionaries must be prepared to deal ruthlessly with their foes.¹⁹⁵

THE REMOVAL OF LARGO CABALLERO

As prime minister, Largo Caballero had maneuvered with cabinet minister Juan García Oliver to block communist infiltration of officers' training schools and to reestablish the effective power of the Republic. Jesús Hernández, who had served in the Largo Caballero government, wrote his memoirs long after he had ceased to be a communist. In these memoirs, Hernández claims that the most important factor that convinced Stalin that it was necessary to get rid of Largo Caballero was his approval of a secret Anglo-French proposal to end the Civil War. According to Hernández, the British and French offered to return Cameroon to German control and to give Italy at least joint control over Spanish Morocco, in exchange for their withdrawal of support from Franco. Hernández reports that Stalin feared that a settlement between the Allies and the Axis could remove a bone of contention and make it easier for Hitler to attack the USSR.¹⁹⁶

Whatever one makes of Hernández's version of events, there was another factor that weighed in the balance, namely, Largo Caballero's plan to launch a major offensive in Estremadura which, if successful, would have changed the balance of power on the Iberian peninsula. By July 1937, however, Largo Caballero was out of office and—as already noted—Juan Negrín, the choice of the Communist Party, had assumed the duties of prime minister. The anarchists were excluded from the Negrín government. The anarchists began to campaign for their return to the government, and finally, on 6 April 1938, Segundo Blanco, an anarchist, entered the Negrín government as minister of education.

But, by then, the Negrín government had already imposed censorship of anarchist publications. By this point, the Stalinists controlled the censorship mechanisms and, on their interpretation, any criticism of their points of view or activities, or of the Soviet Union, was to be counted as treasonous support for Franco. This restriction on the anarchists' freedom of press did not apply, of course, to the communist press which continued to lambaste the Trotskyists and the anarchists.¹⁹⁷ As a result of the censorship, anarchist polemics with the communists disappeared and they started to publish articles praising the Soviet Union as they had never done before.

At the same time, the Negrín government abolished the revolutionary patrols. In addition, the anarchists lost nearly all influence over regular police forces. In place of the anarchist-controlled revolutionary patrols, the Negrín government established the Servicio de Inteligencia Militar (SIM), which was “almost completely” dominated by Stalinists.¹⁹⁸ The Stalinists used the SIM to round up Trotskyists and either kill them or imprison them.

TOWARD DEFEAT

Durruti's death on 20 November 1936 was an early setback for the anarchist cause. It was Durruti who, on 24 July 1936, had led more than 3,000 militiamen (later remembered as “the Durruti Column”) into a heroic battle at Caspe in Aragón. His death from enemy gunfire was seen, by many, as a national tragedy and, when his body was transported to Barcelona for his funeral, a quarter of a million people lined the streets along the route to the cemetery on Montjuich hill at Barcelona to mourn the fallen hero. At Montjuich, more than half a million persons turned out, many of them singing “Hijos del Pueblo,” an anarchist hymn, in his honor. Kern captures the mood among Spanish Republicans in writing that “with him died the model, prototype, and inspiration for revolution. A voluntarist course of action demands great spiritual qualities, and no other anarchist possessed his charisma. Only Durruti had the stature to negotiate with Largo Caballero or to hold the militia together and keep its dissident elements from going off on their own tangents. Probably he alone might have halted the disastrous slide of anarchist fortunes after the cabinet recaptured political power.”¹⁹⁹

Spanish Republicans were haunted by speculations about “what if he had lived” but, in fact, anarchist power had begun to decline already before his death and, in the early months of 1937 communist control of the Second Republic increased—at the expense of the anarchists. Five months later, on 26 April 1937, Italian and German planes razed the Basque market town of Guernica. The strike was purely punitive, intended to demoralize the Republic's defenders, as the town had no military or strategic importance. At the time, Franco's people claimed

that the Basques did this to themselves, but this notion cannot be supported.²⁰⁰ Guernica became a symbol of fascist brutality and electrified the world, inspiring a famous painting by Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) for the Paris World's Fair that same year. But the destruction of Guernica failed to produce any fresh response to the Francoist rebellion. On the contrary, the anticapitalist and anticlerical aspects of the anarchist revolution alienated many in other parts of Europe and in the United States, while Franco's promise to restore the capitalist "old order" and to protect the Church seemed reassuring to many outside Spain.

It is generally agreed that Franco could have won the war earlier, inflicting fewer casualties on the Republic's forces. But Franco's strategy was actually to prolong the war in order to crush the Republic and its defenders totally, carrying out a systematic "programme of terror."²⁰¹ In consequence, it refused all negotiations. By the end of 1937, the rebel forces numbered 600,000 troops, counting also Moroccan and Italian units, which gave the rebels overwhelming military superiority.²⁰² Nominally, the Republic could still field about 500,000 poorly equipped troops (as of the end of 1938), but in real terms it had only about 200,000 troops at its disposal by then.²⁰³ As of the spring of 1938, there were a million refugees crowded into Catalonia alongside the prewar population of 3 million, and food stocks were becoming inadequate. Meanwhile, fascist air raids were also having a demoralizing effect on loyalists.

On 15 April 1938, Franco's forces pushed into Aragón, severing Catalonia from the rest of what was left of the Republic. Franco decided to turn his troops against Valencia but, toward the end of July 1938, the loyalists launched an attack along the Ebro River, hoping to catch the rebels off guard. The Battle of the Ebro was the last great military engagement of the war. The Republic Army initially had the advantage, inflicting heavy losses on the rebels and pushing deep into rebel territory. But, at the end of July, the rebel Condor Legion conducted air attacks on the Republicans, who dug in to hold their ground. The Republicans desperately needed fresh supplies and reinforcements, but none were available. Even so, they held their positions until 15 November 1938, when the rebels finally pushed them back across the Ebro. The battle severely drained the Republican army, which had sustained 100,000 killed in action, wounded, or captured, and which had depleted the Republic's war materiel.²⁰⁴

On 23 December 1938, Franco initiated a general offensive against loyalist positions. The loyalists managed to launch a counteroffensive in Estremadura on 5 January 1939 and conquered a larger chunk of territory than had been taken in any previous operation by loyalist forces. The French border was opened a few days later, and Soviet aid was sent across the border. Unfortunately for the loyalists, most of this aid fell into Francoist hands.²⁰⁵ Barcelona fell on 26 January, and on 5 February 1939, the Republican government fled to France, followed by the last remnants of its army eight days later.

On 7 March 1939, as the Republic was already crumbling, the CNT, FAI, and a third workers' organization merged their respective national committees to form a new National Committee of the Libertarian Movement, but the anarchists no longer hoped for victory, only for an honorable peace. On 28 March 1939, the rebels marched into Madrid. Hostilities ended the following day and Franco announced the end of the war on 1 April 1939. Ramón Salas Larrazábal, a general in Franco's army, admitted in 1977 that the rebels had executed 22,716 loyalists after the civil war had ended, but a study published in 2004 estimated that the number was closer to 50,000.²⁰⁶ In addition, the Franco regime admitted (in 1946) to having incarcerated 280,000 loyalists by November 1940.²⁰⁷ Half a million antifascists fled to France, many of them ending up in French concentration camps.²⁰⁸ Others volunteered, after the outbreak of World War II, to join the Free French Forces or the British army, in order to continue the fight against fascism. They were to be profoundly disappointed when the British, having defeated Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, ended the war, leaving Francisco Franco in power in Spain, where he would rule for another three decades.

ANARCHISM AND THE SURREALIST MOVEMENT

The antiauthoritarian streak in anarchism had its counterpart in the surrealist movement in the world of art, and some surrealists, such as the surrealist poets Robert Desnos and Benjamin Peret, openly sympathized with the anarchists. In fact, Peret joined the Durruti Column and fought at Aragón. Not all surrealists supported the anarchists, of course; some

were Trotskyists, others were drawn to the Soviet model, and still others steered clear of politics. Nonetheless, surrealism, whether in poetry or in the other arts, was clearly an aesthetic movement of the left. Art is the mirror we hold up to the universe so that we may understand its processes more clearly; in art, we see our hopes, our fears, our loves, and our disappointments reflected back to us. The surrealist movement was one of a number of responses to the carnage of World War I which, for the surrealists as well as for the fascists, suggested that the civilization built on the foundations of the rational Enlightenment had ultimately been proven bankrupt.²⁰⁹ As such, it is perhaps not surprising that some surrealists flirted with fascism; most, however, became socialists or communists or anarchist sympathizers.

In response to the supposed bankruptcy of Western civilization, the surrealist poets, painters, and sculptors sought to expose the “unprincipled, dilettantish optimism” of the world of the bourgeoisie and “to organize pessimism.”²¹⁰ Some of the surrealists, such as Salvador Dalí (1904–89) drew inspiration from the writings of Sigmund Freud; the movement included among its numbers the French poet André Breton (1896–1966), French essayist Georges Bataille (1897–1962), the French painter Joan Miró (1893–1983), the French artist André Masson (1896–1987), the Spanish painter Dalí, Spanish painter José Caballero (1915–91), and the Spanish painter, draughtsman, and sculptor Pablo Picasso (1881–1973). The early surrealists thought in terms of “permanent revolution” and aspired “to revolutionize life through art,”²¹¹ which, Dalí thought, could employ a “paranoiac-critical” standpoint whereby “to comprehend the fascist use of capitalist social values such as patriotism and patriarchy specifically in terms of desire.”²¹² The choice of style reflected the surrealists’ conclusion that traditional styles, including “realist” representations of reality, were inadequate means to understand the dilemmas of their times.

The French surrealists greeted the election of the Spanish Republican government on 14 April 1931, ending the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera, with enthusiasm. After the beginning of the war, the surrealists in Paris published pleas urging the French people to support the Spanish Republic and when, a month into the war, the government of France ceased aid shipments to the Republic and closed its borders, the

surrealists protested. The surrealist painters wanted to use their art to register their horror of the Nationalist/rebel/fascist insurgency and their support for the government of the Republic. The challenge for them was to produce art that was politically meaningful, without lapsing into mere propaganda. Joan Miró's oil painting, *El Segador* (The Reaper, 1937), showing a Catalan peasant raising a sickle in defense of his land while giving the Republican salute with his other hand, reflects this dilemma graphically. His *Natura morta del sabatot* (Still Life with Old Shoe), painted later that same year, is arguably more successful in steering clear of propaganda. In this painting, an apple stabbed by a fork is placed next to a wine bottle that looks simultaneously broken and whole, alongside half a loaf of bread and one shoe (or, one might say, half of a pair of shoes, if one wished to associate it metaphorically with the bread). The colors are bizarre, shrieking, surreal, with black as the dominant color.²¹³

That Miró's *Still Life with Old Shoe* was intended as a comment on the Civil War is clear from his later comment: "The civil war was all bombings, deaths, firing squads, and I wanted to depict this very dramatic and sad time. I must confess I wasn't aware that I was painting my *Guernica*. This comparison was made much later. What I do remember is that I was fully aware that I was painting something tremendously serious. The color is certainly what helps give it a penetrating strength."²¹⁴ Chronologically, perhaps the first response, among Spanish surrealists, to the war was Dalí's *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonition of Civil War*, painted a few months before the outbreak of the war. In this prophetic painting, "a monstrous, putrefying body rears high over the Spanish landscape, a Goyesque colossus tearing at itself in a frenzy of sadomasochistic self-destruction."²¹⁵

Among the various artistic responses to the Spanish Civil War, by far the best known is Pablo Picasso's abstract rendition of the Nazi bombing of the Basque town of Guernica on 26 April 1937, in which more than 1,600 persons lost their lives. The town was a noncombatant community having no military or strategic importance and its bombing seemed to be intended purely to terrorize the civilians who were loyal to the Republic. Picasso, who had received a commission from the Spanish Republican government almost four months earlier to paint a monumental work for the Spanish pavilion at the forthcoming Paris World's

Fair, had not reached any clear conclusion as to how to proceed with this work when the attack on Guernica occurred.²¹⁶ But five days after the destruction of Guernica, Picasso began to work on the first of forty-five sketches in preparation for his painting, *Guernica*. The painting, displayed at the Fair, created a furor, with some on the Left asserting that socialist realism, an artistic style dictated by Stalin, would have served as a better vehicle for an indictment of Franco's forces, and those on the Right protesting that precisely this event was being highlighted in the Spanish pavilion.²¹⁷ Picasso himself would later admit that, in his painting *Guernica*, "there is a deliberate appeal to people, a deliberate sense of propaganda."²¹⁸

The surrealists, some of whom later emigrated to the United States, were a largely French and Spanish movement in the 1930s. Their inspiration predated the Spanish anarchist revolution, but that revolution triggered a powerful response among a number of surrealists, one of whom (André Masson) even worked for the anarchist-dominated government in Barcelona. The Spanish Civil War and the struggle of the Spanish Republic to survive constituted the cause célèbre of the late 1930s and, as such, proved a thematic focus for the surrealists to develop their art and to trumpet their message.

ANARCHISM IN HISTORY

Both liberal democrats and anarchists place great stress on assuring freedom—or liberty—for people. But there are four pivotal questions on which the two ideologies part company. The first, obviously, has to do with the machinery of government itself. For liberal democrats (who trace their origins to Locke and Kant), like their cousins the social democrats (who represent the reformist current of the movement which traces its origins back to Marx and Engels), the state is a potentially useful agency where power is concentrated, power which can be used to effect positive change and even assure justice according to some principle. But for the anarchists, the political power of the state involves, of necessity, coercion and enforcement—rather than reliance on incentives to cooperate—and coercion and enforcement signify no less than an end to

freedom. As A. Bellegrarique, an adherent of Proudhon, put it, “Power must of necessity be exercised for the benefit of those who have it and to the injury of those who have it not; it is not possible to set it in motion without harming [someone].”²¹⁹ Or, as Bakunin wrote, “if there is a state, then necessarily there is domination and consequently slavery. A state without slavery, open or camouflaged, is inconceivable.”²²⁰ Accordingly, for Bakunin and, indeed, for anarchists in general, there is no such thing as a “people’s state.”²²¹

Second, the kind of freedom offered by liberal democrats, at least in some cases, tends to be associated with widening gaps of economic inequality, persistent inequality in gender relations, and a tendency to believe that free speech must entail some allowance for the promotion of racial, religious, sexual, and antiimmigrant intolerance; xenophobia and homophobia, thus, are championed, by those on the right-wing of the democratic tradition (“conservatives” as they style themselves), as basic human rights. Anarchists reject the notion that equality should be sacrificed for the sake of the fuller freedom of the rich—a freedom which comes at the expense of working-class and even middle-class people whether they are conscious of it or not. For the anarchists, just as for the French revolutionaries of 1789, liberty and equality go hand in hand. Not only that, but fraternité—or, as we are calling it here, *solidarity*—is also part of the revolutionary triad.

Third, liberal democrats, especially those on the left wing of the liberal-democratic tradition, emphasize the separation of Church and state and, simultaneously, freedom of religion. Anarchists, by contrast, have traditionally viewed the Churches as a central part of the problem, as hostile to free thought and critical inquiry, as repressive in domains which should be left to private choice, and often (as in pre-Civil War Spain) as supportive of the ruling class. For anarchists, thus, it is not enough to bring an end to government; one must also bring an end to ecclesiastical dominion.

This leads us to the fourth distinction between liberal democrats and anarchists. For the former, human freedom is best realized through an emphasis on individual rights and liberties, although, to be fair, adherents to the left wing of the liberal tradition are not incognizant of the imperatives of communal and social interests and needs. But the anarchists,

in seeking to abolish both the state and capitalism, place greater faith than left-liberals or social democrats—let alone conservatives—in the capacity of people to establish harmonious relations of solidarity and mutual aid in the absence of government of some sort. Modern-day libertarians such as Robert Nozick should not be confused with either left-liberals or anarchists, because the program they espouse, of retaining the state but chopping away its ability to provide social services to the needy and limiting its role largely to providing internal and external security, is a recipe suited only to serve the interests of the rich and powerful.²²²

The Spanish anarchist experiment unfolded in conditions of war and deprivation, and the entire thing was over within three years. It is therefore extremely difficult, if not impossible, to know in which direction the anarchist/collectivist system would have evolved had it been left to its own devices. If one imagines the Weimar Republic crushed by military force in 1924 or Bolshevik Russia defeated on the field of battle in 1921 or, for that matter, the American republic defeated by the British at Yorktown, rather than the reverse, one can well imagine that historians would be tempted to idealize these “experiments,” having no more than seven or fewer years by which to judge any of them.

Would the anarchists have developed a government in the classic sense, in spite of themselves? Or would they have gradually approximated the Aristotelian ideal of the *polis*, in which citizens themselves participated in taking the decisions affecting the community? Or would they have succeeded in finding a way to take politics out of the management of the affairs of the community? Whether they might have succeeded or not, the anarchists developed an alternative political model, one not necessarily incompatible with liberal values of freedom, equality, and tolerance, even though they interpreted these values in their own way, but sought to chart a course to social harmony through thoroughgoing egalitarianism. In remembering the anarchists in Spain, thus, we should keep in mind their unique effort to reconcile a radical commitment to human freedom with a deep conviction that people could live best by organizing their lives on a collectivist basis; their opposition to any form of repression, whether political or economic or spiritual; and their commitment to a thorough-going program to bring about civic, social, and economic equality among all members of the community.

Notes

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- 5 Ibid.
- 6 For a useful discussion of Godwin's political ideas, see Isaac Kramnick, "On Anarchism and the Real World: William Godwin and Radical England," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 66, no. 1 (March 1972), 114–28.
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- 14 See Southworth, *Conspiracy and the Spanish Civil War*, 50, 69; also David T. Cattell, *Communism and the Spanish Civil War* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1956), *passim*.
- 15 As quoted in Southworth, *Conspiracy and the Spanish Civil War*, 15.

- 16 As quoted in Douglas Little, "Red Scare, 1936: Anti-Bolshevism and the Origins of British Non-Intervention in the Spanish Civil War," *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 23, no. 2 (April 1988), 295.
- 17 As quoted in *ibid.*, 299.
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- 19 As quoted in Helen Graham, "The Undeclared? Violence and the Afterlife of Francoism," in Helen Graham, Jo Labanyi, Jorge Marco, Paul Preston, and Michael Richards, *Forum* to discuss Paul Preston's *The Spanish Holocaust*, *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 16, no. 1 (2014), 153, quoting from Juan de Iturralde, *La Guerra de Franco: los vascos y la Iglesia*, 2 vols. (San Sebastian: Publicaciones Clero Vasco, 1978), 1:433.
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- 21 Stanley Payne, *The Collapse of the Spanish Republic, 1933–1936: Origins of the Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), as summarized in Ealham, "'Myths' and the Spanish Civil War," 367.
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- 23 Ealham, "'Myths' and the Spanish Civil War," 368.
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- 42 Graham, *The Spanish Republic at War*, 201.
- 43 Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *The Spanish Civil War: Origins, Course and Outcomes* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), 77.
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- 49 Ibid., 245.
- 50 Ealham, “‘Myths’ and the Spanish Civil War,” 374.
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- 53 Ealham, “Myths’ and the Spanish Civil War,” 371.

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- 56 George R. Esenwein, *The Spanish Civil War: A Modern Tragedy* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 4.
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CHAPTER 6

Epilogue ***In Defense of Liberal Democracy*** ***—And a Warning***

In the preceding chapters, I have discussed the workings of three collectivist alternatives to democracy each of which sketched a vision of an alternative modernity and emerged and died in the course of the twentieth century: communism (in its Soviet incarnation), fascism (in its Italian Fascist and German Nazi incarnations), and anarchism (in its all-too-brief Spanish incarnation). I have suggested that all three visions were revolutionary, collectivist, and hostile to liberal democracy, and that each of these regimes or movements sought to build an “alternative modernity.” The case for Spanish anarchists being modernist may not be as clear as the cases for the Soviet and fascist projects. However, if one remembers that the anarchists rejected liberal democracy and fascism alike, as well as the conservative monarchy that had ruled Spain on and off until 1931, sketched a vision of radical equality for all citizens including women, and inspired aesthetic surrealism with implicit commentary on life-as-it-was, it seems to me that the characterization of Spanish anarchism as also seeking to promote an alternative modernity is at least plausible if not, as I believe, convincing. In a liberal democracy, by contrast, elected officials often do not look further in the future than the next election.

There are certainly many nondemocratic systems that have come and gone in history, including in twentieth-century Europe. In the introduction, I mentioned the personal dictatorship of Marshal Józef Piłsudski in Poland (1926–35), the royal dictatorship of King Carol II in Romania (1930–40), the clerico-fascist regime of Monsignor Jozef Tiso in Slovakia (1939–45), the quisling regimes of Milan Nedić in Serbia (1941–44) and Ante Pavelić in Croatia (1941–45), the Portuguese regime of António

de Oliveira Salazar (1889–1970), which was inspired at least in part by Catholic social doctrine, and the Greek military junta which ruled in Athens during 1967–74. But neither the Salazar regime nor the Greek junta sketched out a collectivist vision of an alternative modernity, while the short-lived Axis collaborationist regimes of Tiso, Pavelić, and Nedić were, at best, approximations of the Nazi vision already discussed in chapter 4. In any event, I have already spelled out in some detail, in the introduction, my criteria for the selection and omission of cases, and the foregoing sentences are intended only to remind the reader of the most basic points I wish to make.

In this concluding chapter, I do not intend to replicate the historical design of the preceding chapters. What I propose to do, rather, is to offer some reflections, partly philosophical and partly in the tradition of historical sociology, on the strengths and advantages, vulnerabilities, and complications associated with liberal democracy, assessing two recent European examples of democratic backsliding, as well as recent developments in the United States, and to suggest that, whatever its debilities in practice, liberal democracy is the ideal toward which nations should aspire. Where it seems to me useful, I will present examples, drawing on the experiences of countries I know best, which is to say the United States, Germany, Russia, and the postsocialist countries of Eastern Europe, and to a lesser extent Great Britain. At the outset, it seems to me to be worth stressing the bipolar nature of this binary term, *liberal democracy*. To be precise, *liberalism* and *democracy* refer to distinct things. As noted already in chapter 3, *liberalism* refers to a political creed emphasizing the rule of law, individual rights (and duties), toleration, respect for the harm principle, equality (whether defined broadly or narrowly), and the neutrality of the state in matters of religion. *Liberalism*, thus, is a set of ideals or values, which a society may seek to preserve, protect, and promote. *Democracy*, by contrast, refers to a method by which those ideals and values may potentially be protected and by which decisions are taken. As Joseph Schumpeter put it in his *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, “the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide [on the issues of the day] by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote.”¹ In other words, citizens in

a democratic state do not make decisions on public policy (except, in what is often—as I show later in this chapter—a corrupted method, in referenda) and are afforded, rather, the possibility to choose between the candidates put forth by competing power blocs (political parties) in electing those persons who are to govern them.² *Democracy*, in a word, may be understood as a system allowing citizens to vote for what or whom they want, or at least think they want, with the result corresponding to what the majority of the voters chose. That said, liberalism and democracy go together. This is because, as Norberto Bobbio has stressed, democratic choice is effective only if and when voters are presented with real alternatives³—and hence, not a “choice” between Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum. But, for there to be a real choice between real alternatives on offer, there must, in turn, be secure freedoms of thought, speech, and assembly. Benedictus de Spinoza (1632–1677) was perhaps the first thinker to make explicit and to defend the importance of freedom of thought.⁴ This means that liberalism and democracy are intertwined and interdependent. It also means that the less liberal a state is—meaning the less tolerant where religious, ethnic, and sexual minorities are concerned, the less effective in securing people’s civic equality, the less respectful of the rule of law, and so on—the less democratic that state will be. There have been illiberal democracies from time to time,⁵ just as there have been liberal autocracies, as exemplified by the Habsburg rulers Maria Theresa and Joseph II from 1740 to 1790, but both illiberal democracies and liberal autocracies are inherently unstable: for however long they last, they are ever in a state of being about to break down, fragment, or collapse.

ADVANTAGES AND STRENGTHS

The advantages and strengths of liberal democracy are several. First, by giving citizens a chance—as they say in America—to “vote the bums out,” people do not need to overthrow the system as long as they have faith that one of the alternative power blocs (parties) may introduce better policies and give them what they want. Of course, not everyone wants the same thing, but one mark of a liberal democracy functioning

well, is that the majority of citizens feel that one or another political party or candidate speaks to their concerns and that they accept that other citizens may have other (reasonable) demands and needs. Second, because of the first advantage, liberal democracies enjoy considerable legitimacy with their citizens (meaning that they accept the rules of the political game), even if there are some citizens who reject democracy altogether. System legitimacy translates into stability as well as into the ability of the system to weather economic and other storms. To take an example: the 1929 stock market crash in the United States hit working-class people very hard and even people who had been middle-class found themselves in serious trouble; but the system survived, people voted the Republicans out of office and voted in Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a Democrat, as president. In Germany, by contrast, the economic woes of that era drove many to despair of the Weimar Republic and to embrace the Nazi Party. The Weimar Republic, for all of the freedoms it afforded people,⁶ was not well loved, and many Germans did not consider it fully legitimate.⁷ Third, insofar as liberal democracies assure people of freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of academic research, and unhindered access to the collections in public libraries, scientific, medical, and other institutions, research is more effective in liberal democracies than in closed societies; the record of the Soviet Union proves this conclusively. Indeed, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's call for glasnost (openness) in the second half of the 1980s recognized the limitations imposed by a closed society on research of all kinds. Closely related to this is a fourth advantage, namely, the possibility to involve greater numbers of people in considering policy alternatives. The Paduan theologian Marsiglio de Padua (1275–1342) recognized this and, in his treatise *Defensor Pacis*, wrote that “the best law is made only through the hearing and command of the entire multitude” of citizens,⁸ since “every whole, or at least every corporeal whole, is greater in mass and in virtue than any part of it taken separately.”⁹ Fifth, in the modern (or, if one prefers, postmodern) world, only liberal democracy, in one or another of its manifestations, guarantees the rule of law, providing, thus, predictability, at least for the duration that a given law is in effect. None of the alternatives to democracy considered in this volume respect the rule of law. For the fascists, the will of the leader/Führer/Duce

trumps the law; whatever may be written on the books, effective law is only whatever the leader says it is. For the Soviet communists, some laws had secret clauses that trumped the public clauses (for example, concerning which religious groups should not be allowed to register, regardless of whether they met the stipulated legal requirements for registration). Moreover, the laws on the books were interpreted and applied by the general secretary in the Stalin era, and by the Politburo or Central Committee in the post-Stalin era, at least until Gorbachev started to rock the boat. Where the anarchists are concerned, they rejected the state and all its instruments, including the law and the police; decisions about matters of public interest would be taken by “the people” organized in collectives. Only liberal democracy, thus, respects the rule of law.

I have mentioned above that liberal democracy may have sundry manifestations. One can parse this claim in either of two ways, both of them legitimate. The first is to distinguish between presidential systems, semi-presidential systems, and parliamentary systems. On this count, Juan Linz has pointed to the better record of parliamentary systems (such as that in Great Britain), when compared with presidential systems (such as that in the United States), with parliamentary systems generally proving to be more stable, if not also better equipped to represent and reflect the diverse opinions among the citizenry. In his view, “the superior historical performance of parliamentary democracies is no accident. A careful comparison of parliamentarism as such with presidentialism as such leads to the conclusion that, on balance, the former is more conducive to stable democracy than the latter.”¹⁰ The second way to parse this claim is to note that liberal democracies may or may not bring on board constitutional monarchs. In Great Britain, kings and queens have functioned as constitutional monarchs largely subordinate to parliament ever since William and Mary began their joint reign in 1689. In addition, although social democratic parties grew out of the reformist wing of the Second International and, thus, may trace their origins to Karl Marx, the social democratic and labor parties in Europe today have, without exception, broken with key programmatic features of the Marxist tradition and embraced the principal features of the liberal project. For example, in Germany, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) proved to be unable to move forward electorally as long as it retained Marxist bag-

gage and, because of its clinging to revolutionary traditions, was attracting only 28.8 percent of the vote by 1953.¹¹ In response, the SPD met in Bad Godesberg for an Extraordinary Party Congress from 13 to 15 November 1959. In the course of that Congress, the party declared itself “opposed to every dictatorship, every kind of totalitarian and authoritarian rule; for these disregard human dignity, annihilate freedom and destroy the law.”¹² The SPD went further and declared its respect for freedom of religion and conscience, its loyalty to the democratic order, and its respect for the rights of both the minority and the majority, and offered assurances that the judiciary should enjoy both external and internal independence and that the media and film industries must enjoy independence and be able to “collect, edit, [and] disseminate information without hindrance.”¹³ The new party program went on to defend the right of all workers and functionaries to join labor unions of an independent character, endorsed the principle that scientific research and teaching must be free, and underlined the importance of freedoms of thought, belief, and conscience.¹⁴ Taken in sum, these points confirmed the SPD’s commitment to liberal democracy, in turn justifying my construal of the SPD as a left-liberal party. To clarify: left-liberalism accepts capitalism but believes that the government should adopt measures to limit the accumulation of private wealth, use taxation to reduce the disparity between the richest and poorest members of society, adopt policies to protect the environment, assure full employment as far as possible, and rise to the challenge posed by global warming. Thus, to be a left-liberal is, in most cases, the same thing as being a social democrat, bringing along also such demands as a comprehensive health plan covered by taxation, investments in public education, the right of every citizen to an old-age pension, and full legal, social, and economic equality for women, including for women to enjoy equal opportunity in education and employment.¹⁵ Even within the United States, one finds the Democratic Party embracing the role of protector of working-class people, even if, until recently, most party elders have felt constrained to claim to champion “the middle class,” implicitly folding the poor and the homeless into this amorphous and ill-labelled group or simply ignoring them altogether.

RIVAL TRADITIONS OF DEMOCRACY

Contemporary democracies look back to one of two rival traditions of democracy. Historically, the first of these is the Anglo-American tradition that can be traced back to the English philosopher and political activist John Locke (1632–1704) and the American revolutionary and later president Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826). For Locke, the essential values to be protected were life, liberty, and property; in Jefferson's famous phrase, this Lockean idea was translated into "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Although Locke and Jefferson both subscribed to some notion of equality, there is nothing in either formula about equality, let alone solidarity. Whatever Locke wrote in theory, in practice he defended the colonial expropriation of Amerindian land, on the argument that, while the Amerindians might be equal in the eyes of God, their way of life was inferior to the extent that, in his view, they lived in a "state of nature."¹⁶ Where Jefferson is concerned, there was also a tension between theory and practice: in theory he had a deep commitment to the principle of human equality; in practice, he was a slaveholder. As John Diggins has pointed out, "On the one hand Jefferson's observations on the Negro's physical characteristics and mental peculiarities led him to doubt his own belief in universal equality, and on the other hand he could never bring himself to believe that the Creator had intended all men for equality without equipping them with equal abilities."¹⁷ But, at least for the early liberal period, since the protection of property was central in the thinking of the founders of this tradition, it followed logically that a narrow franchise, restricting suffrage to property owners, was suitable. In the United States, voting rights were originally restricted to male property owners, although the franchise was gradually extended in the course of the nineteenth century, state by state, to citizens not owning property. The second tradition may be traced back to the French Revolution, which popularized the slogan "liberté, égalité, fraternité" (liberty, equality, fraternity). By "fraternity," the French revolutionaries meant that we are all in this together, which is to say that it was a plea for solidarity. This latter tradition, reflected also in the writings of the British-American writer Thomas Paine (1737–1809), demanded universal suffrage and called for the government to do

much more than protect people's lives and property, indeed assure all citizens (and permanent residents) of state-funded medical care, free public education, and guaranteed old-age pensions.¹⁸

In the nineteenth century, inequalities of wealth and income grew rapidly as a by-product of the industrial revolution. But, as Thomas Piketty has noted, "the two world wars, and the public policies that followed from them, [have] play[ed] a central role in reducing inequalities in the twentieth century."¹⁹ Edward Broadbent confirms this analysis, writing that during 1945–80, most developed democracies pursued the goal of increasing the social and economic equality of their citizens, establishing programs of subsidized health care, pensions, and so on.²⁰ One may understand those years as an era when left-liberals, such as U.S. President Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908–73), with his war on poverty, were ascendant. But in the 1980s, neoliberals²¹ (championing *laissez faire* economics) such as U.S. President Ronald Reagan (1911–2004) and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1925–2013), inspired by the tradition of prizing property over equality, reversed some of the policies of the preceding era, cutting back on the equalizing role of the state and reestablishing the dominance of the market. What the neoliberals accomplished, according to Broadbent, was to embrace "a political agenda that intensified inequality both within the developed democracies and on a global basis ... At the extremes, both the rich and the poor have increased in numbers. However, while the share going to the rich has increased, that to the poor has declined."²² There is a further dilemma here, namely, that while *laissez faire* economics has proven to be harmful to those on the lower end of the income scale, it has also shown itself to be, generally speaking, positive for *overall* economic growth and output. Entailed in this is the danger of democracy decaying into plutocracy. In the United States, the *New York Times* warned, as early as 1889, of "the peril of plutocracy." The newspaper conceded that there had been advances in production and distribution over preceding decades. It added, however, that this had been "accompanied by an increasing disparity of fortunes and extremes of poverty and wealth." "The danger," the *New York Times* article continued, was that this was promoting the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a small "plutocratic class, which tends more and more to direct the forces of society, to subsidize the press

and even the pulpit, and to control the management of political parties, the results of elections, the action of legislative bodies, and the course of public administration.”²³ Eighty-one years later, the *New York Times* once again sounded the alarm, warning that the United States was “on the road to becoming a plutocracy.” On that occasion, the newspaper noted, “It is getting to be almost customary for candidates for major political office to have to possess private fortunes or make entangling commitments to special interests in order to be elected. In certain states such as California, it is now the practice for a few rich men to club together and financially sponsor a candidate.”²⁴ As Robert Dahl has succinctly put it, “Because market capitalism inevitably creates inequalities, it limits the democratic potential of polyarchal democracy by generating inequalities in the distribution of political resources.”²⁵

Worldwide, the richest 1 percent owned 50 percent of the world’s wealth in 2016, with the richest sixty-two persons owning as much as the poorest half of the world’s population.²⁶ In September 2015, *Fortune* magazine claimed that the United States had “the largest wealth inequality gap of 55 countries studied” in Allianz’s *Global Wealth Report* for 2015,²⁷ while the richest 1 percent of Americans own about one-third of the nation’s wealth, the top 5 percent control more than 60 percent, and 80 percent of Americans have a combined share of just 7 percent of the nation’s wealth.²⁸ (An alternative report, issued by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development reported the United States had the fourth highest Gini coefficient for income inequality, after Turkey, Mexico, and Chile.²⁹) Economic power translates into political power; thus, extreme inequality of wealth undermines the presupposition of political equality that lies at the heart of the liberal democratic ideal. As Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page reported in *Perspectives on Politics* in 2014, “When a majority of citizens disagree with economic elites or with organized interests, they generally lose. Moreover, because of the strong status quo bias built into the U.S. political system, even when fairly large majorities of Americans favor policy change, they generally do not get it.”³⁰ Indeed, they argued that “mass-based interest groups and average citizens have little or no independent influence.”³¹ Gilens and Page considered the rejoinder that economic elites have better information than the general public, understand better which policies will

promote the public good, and choose to promote precisely those policies. The authors rejected this defense, however, suggesting rather that “ordinary citizens generally know their own values and interests pretty well, and that their expressed policy preferences are worthy of respect.”³²

There is some point at which a plutocracy ceases to qualify as a liberal democracy. In the early 2010s, Piketty records, the wealthiest 10 percent of people in France, Germany, Great Britain, and Italy controlled roughly 60 percent of the nation’s wealth in each case, while in the United States the wealthiest 10 percent owned 72 percent of the country’s wealth.³³ Worldwide, the wealthiest 0.1 percent of the world’s population controlled 20 percent of the total wealth of the planet, with an average fortune of 10 million euros each.³⁴ In the United States, the high level of inequality achieved in recent decades is due, in the first place, to extraordinarily high incomes among the “superstars” of American society, rather than to inherited wealth.³⁵

If one tries to imagine a state in which all citizens enjoy *complete* liberty and *complete* equality, one immediately apprehends that there is a tension between these two, and that some sort of balance is entailed in any solution. Whatever else we can manage, we cannot have complete freedom and complete equality, since one person’s “complete” freedom would, inevitably, involve disrespect for the freedom and equality of another person. The question is, where to find the balance.

VULNERABILITIES AND COMPLICATIONS, I: CORRUPTION AND REFERENDA

I have listed some advantages and strengths which liberal democracy has, and they are by no means inconsiderable. But liberal democracy has also proven to have some vulnerabilities and complications. These should not be seen as black-or-white, zero-sum weaknesses, but as matters of degree. Certainly, to the extent that a democracy does not introduce institutional and legal safeguards against plutocracy, this may be counted as a weakness, if not also as a danger for democracy. A second potential weakness of *any* political system, including democracies—but especially new democracies, as found in postsocialist Eastern Europe—is *corruption*,

which I have defined elsewhere as “conscious deviation from established standards or rules, intended to benefit one or more parties.”³⁶ Corruption, which subverts and weakens a liberal democracy (as it does any state), by diverting public funds or appointments away from the public interest and in the direction of serving the private interests of office-holders or influential persons outside the government, is a matter of degree. The annual reports of Transparency International are a valuable resource in seeing how local people perceive the level of corruption in their respective countries. According to the 2016 Corruption Perceptions Index issued by that agency, Denmark was the least corrupt of 176 countries ranked, followed in order by New Zealand, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway, Singapore, and The Netherlands. Of course, Singapore is not considered a democracy. Canada ranked ninth least corrupt, just behind Singapore, with Germany, Luxembourg, and the United Kingdom tied for tenth place, the United States in eighteenth place, Japan in twentieth place, and France in twenty-third place.³⁷ What is clear from the full table is that, the lower one looks on the list, the less democratic the countries are. But liberal democracies are not immune to corruption and the greater the vulnerability to corruption, the greater the risk to the stability of the given democratic order.

Rather obviously, an educated and informed citizenry is better situated to make sensible choices at election time, than a poorly educated citizenry that does not understand either the intentions or the capacities of the candidates or—at referendum time—the actual contents of referenda presented for their judgment. Unfortunately, one of the characteristics of political propaganda and rhetoric is precisely the tendency to try to lull people into accepting propositions which, if they understood what was at issue and were thinking clearly, they would never accept. Three referenda in the United States may illustrate the point. The first of these is Proposition 13, presented to the voters in California in June 1978. The proposition, passed by the voters, rolled back property taxes to their 1975 levels and limited increases on property tax to 2 percent annually for as long as the property in question did not change hands. It also took the power to decide on taxation away from the state legislature. The backers of Proposition 13 made three promises: first, “that landlords would pass tax savings on to tenants in the form of lower rents”; second, that the

reduction in the state budget would stimulate an “increase [in] the efficiency of government in general and of public schools in particular”; and third, that the savings to property owners would stimulate the California economy.³⁸ All three of these promises proved to be false prophecies and the results were very different from what the voters had been led to expect. To begin with, many public services were eliminated, along with more than 3,000 jobs; police and fire protection were cut back in some districts; and libraries and museums suffered tangible cuts in funding.³⁹ Furthermore, local governments were also hit hard, losing \$7 billion in tax revenue. And, of course, there were no across-the-board reductions of rent. All in all, the measure “produced outcomes ... very different from those intended by the sponsors of the proposition and those who voted for it.”⁴⁰

The second case of a referendum that went awry was Amendment 2, offered to the citizens of Colorado in November 1992. The text of the amendment read as follows: “Shall there be an amendment to Article II of the Colorado Constitution to prohibit the state of Colorado and any of its political subdivisions from adopting or enforcing any law or policy which provides that homosexual, lesbian, or bisexual orientation, conduct, or relationships constitutes or entitles [sic] a person to claim any minority or protected status, quota preference, or discrimination?”⁴¹ Voters were encouraged by supporters of Amendment 2 to believe that the measure would have the effect only of preventing members of sexual minorities from obtaining special treatment. In actual fact, the amendment, which was passed by popular vote but never put into practice, “would have repealed laws in Denver, Boulder and Aspen prohibiting discrimination against homosexuals in jobs and housing, and it would have forbidden the passage of any such law in the state.”⁴² In the short run, various associations which had planned to hold conventions in the state of Colorado, canceled those plans, thereby punishing the hotel, restaurant, and tourist industries in that state. Many of those who had voted for the measure were shocked and dismayed when they learned that the intention and effect of the amendment were entirely different in spirit from what they had been given to understand. But Amendment 2 became history in December 1993, when a Colorado district judge ruled that it violated the U.S. Constitution’s guarantee of equal protection.⁴³

The third case comes from Washington state where, in 1999, Tim Eyman, a watch salesman from Mukilteo, a small town with 17,000 inhabitants north of Seattle, collected 514,141 signatures to get a referendum on the car license fee on the ballot. Initiative 695, as it was listed, proposed to establish a flat rate for the car license fee. In spite of warnings across the pages of the *Seattle Times*, as well as in other media, that the measure would have disastrous consequences for the state budget, the initiative was passed in November 1999, with 56.16 percent of the voters supporting it.⁴⁴ In the aftermath, the subsidy for the ferry to Bainbridge Island was cut, there were severe cuts to bus service in Spokane, and funding for public health and road repairs was also impacted. Later, the Washington Supreme Court declared the initiative invalid.⁴⁵

In each of these three cases, there were outcries of protest after the measure in question passed, including from people who had supported it. The usual phrase one heard in each case was “We had no idea”—despite the fact that local media had issued plenty of warnings about the expected consequences. But there were, of course, also advocates, who gained access to the media. Voters were confused and, at least in the Coloradan case, those backing the measure deliberately sowed confusion with misleading rhetoric. This raises the question whether voting by confused citizens, who vote for measures the passage of which they come to regret, can be characterized as authentic democracy in action—or is this not, rather, the miscarriage of democracy? Schumpeter had misgivings about allowing the public to vote on public policy. Voters often “prove themselves bad judges of their own long-run interests,” he warned, “for it is only the short-run promise that tells politically and only short-run rationality that asserts itself effectively.”⁴⁶ Of course, in theory, voters can launch fresh initiatives to repeal measures they do not like, but organizing referenda requires that someone take the lead and this does not always happen when it comes to repealing unpopular measures.

VULNERABILITIES AND COMPLICATIONS, II: FREQUENT ELECTIONS, HATE SPEECH, AND MULTIETHNICITY

Without claiming that the list of vulnerabilities and complications presented here is a complete list of such, I wish to specify three further ways in which democracy can be subverted or undermined or, in the last case, even destabilized. The first comes again from Schumpeter's classic work, where the Harvard professor cautioned that frequent elections had the unintended consequence of repeatedly taking elected representatives away from legislative work in order to run for reelection. But that was not the main fault which Schumpeter found with frequent elections. The main problem was that frequent elections induced elected legislators to focus on the short term, to advocate and adopt measures that would be popular in the short term—thereby boosting their chances for reelection—regardless of problems which could be foreseen for the long term.⁴⁷ Repeated tax cuts in the United States are calculated to please voters and win elections—but at the cost of a ballooning national debt, which rose from 907 billion dollars in 1980 to 2.8 trillion by the end of the Reagan presidency in 1989, escalating further to 5.6 trillion dollars by 1999, when George W. Bush's presidency was drawing to a close.⁴⁸ In fact, in 1993 the Clinton administration had succeeded in pushing through a tax increase raising the tax rates for the upper two brackets to 36 percent and 39.6 percent,⁴⁹ but the two tax cuts passed during George W. Bush's presidency, while it brought some relief to taxpayers, also increased the national debt by \$1.35 trillion over ten years.⁵⁰ As of February 2016, the U.S. national debt stood at just over 18 trillion dollars, rising to just under 20 trillion dollars by early February 2017.⁵¹ Yet some 63.5 trillion dollars are in private hands in the United States—enough to pay off the nation's debt almost three times over.⁵²

Hate speech is more insidious and yet, in the United States at least, it continues to have its defenders, who champion it as a legitimate example of free speech. The problem, of course, is twofold: first, it can make the targets of hate speech feel extremely uncomfortable and potentially lead to their being ostracized or segregated; second, hate speech can encourage or instigate violence against those who are targeted by hate

speech, even legitimating violence in the minds of the perpetrators. The history of the Ku Klux Klan (in both of its incarnations), the Know Nothing Party,⁵³ persistent anti-Semitism and homophobia, and, especially since the attack on New York's twin towers on 9/11, virulent Islamophobia in some quarters—all serve to demonstrate that the United States is not immune to hatreds of various kinds, and hate speech has accompanied each of these. In 2015, the *New York Times* lambasted a Muhammad Art Exhibit and Contest being staged in Garland, Texas, as “an exercise in bigotry and hatred posing as a blow for freedom.”⁵⁴ Only a few months later, at a Southern California high school, students were told that they had the right to display antigay emblems or stickers, on the argument—offered by history teacher Amy Oberman—that “students do not ‘shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.’”⁵⁵

Finally, there is the matter of multiethnicity, which no less a figure than John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) considered a challenge, if not an impediment, to stable, representative government. In his words,

Among a people without fellow-feeling, especially if they read and speak different languages, the united public opinion, necessary to the working of representative government, cannot exist. The influences which form opinions and decide political acts are different in the different sections of the country. An altogether different set of leaders have the confidence of one part of the country and of another. The same books, newspapers, pamphlets, speeches, do not reach them. One section does not know what opinions, or what instigations, are circulating in another. The same incidents, the same acts, the same system of government, affect them in different ways; and each fears more injury to itself from the other nationalities than from the common arbiter, the state. Their mutual antipathies are generally much stronger than jealousy of the government.⁵⁶

Fearing that a multiethnic population would result in an unstable government, potentially tearing the state apart, Mill concluded that “it is in general a *necessary* condition of free institutions that the boundaries of governments should coincide in the main with those of nationalities.”⁵⁷

If recent history is any guide, it would seem that, when it comes to long-established democracies, Mill is dead wrong. Looking to Europe, we find that the two multiethnic states which have fallen apart in the past seventy years (since the end of World War II)—Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union—were *not* democracies (representative governments, in Mill's terminology) but decaying one-party systems operating under communist hegemony. Looking to Western democracies, one finds Anglophones and Francophones coexisting in relative harmony in Canada, and English, Welsh, and Scots deciding their future(s) by negotiation and plebiscite and, at this writing, still planning to remain together in a common union. Multiethnicity or multilingualism certainly complicates the picture, but it does not spell doom for the state, unless there are other factors present. In Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, those other factors were illegitimate government, economic deterioration, and growing political polarization. The interrepublican borders separating Yugoslavia's six constituent republics (and two autonomous provinces) and the Soviet Union's fifteen republics were fault lines along which the respective federations could—and, in the event, did—experience tremors, leading to breakup. None of the consolidated liberal democracies have experienced similar problems.

On the other hand, a review of 123 democratizations undertaken in 88 countries from 1960 to 2004 revealed that “democratizations in countries with ethnic fragmentation greater than the world average were reversed 51 percent of the time, as compared to 38 percent of the time when ethnic fragmentation was below the average.”⁵⁸ Ethnic fragmentation is potentially a problem, thus, for new democracies, but not for old democracies.

BACKSLIDING IN NEW DEMOCRACIES

Why discuss democratic backsliding at all? There are at least two reasons why I consider this worthwhile. First, the phenomenon alerts us to vulnerabilities in certain democratic states, which is to say to the limits of democratic consolidation and even, where backsliding occurs, to the limits of local understanding of how to build democracy. For example,

is democracy just about holding free elections and then letting the victorious party rule? That, most liberal democrats believe, is a mistaken view of what democracy should be. Second, democratic backsliding reminds us that not everyone in a democracy may share a commitment to the principles of democracy and that, as a consequence—as the authors of *The Federalist Papers* understood—the institutions of democracy need to be protected from decay or subversion. Although backsliding is potentially a danger in any and all democracies, the danger of backsliding has proven to be greater in new democracies—at least until the age of Trump—whether or not ethnic fragmentation is present. Why is this so? There are at least five reasons for this. First, as Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba noted in their *Civic Culture* more than half a century ago, stable liberal (civic) democracy is sustained by a supportive political culture, which takes generations to evolve and consolidate. The socialization process that took place in communist Eastern Europe scarcely prepared local populations for liberal democracy. Second, as already mentioned, in Great Britain and the United States, liberal political culture developed over a period of more than a century before the establishment of universal suffrage. In the newly decommunized states of Eastern Europe, by contrast, the formula “one person, one vote” is taken for granted, no doubt inevitably, but many citizens have preferred to vote for authoritarian leaders hostile to democracy, even if not necessarily with a clear understanding of the consequences of their votes, or even conscious of what their choices entailed. Third, partly because some officials, such as judges and police, are relatively poorly paid and partly because the ethic of professionalism, prizing public interest over personal gain, is not deeply rooted in much of the region—with Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, and Bulgaria standing out for high levels of corruption in the years following the collapse of the communist organizational monopoly in 1989–90—corruption has been a serious problem in the postsocialist world. The Czech Republic and the Baltic republics stand out as glorious exceptions to this generalization. Fourth, as Kapstein and Converse relate, “young democracies are likely to suffer from institutional weaknesses. This is to be expected: Institutions take time to build and to develop credibility.” Conversely, “the longer a democratic regime endures, the less likely is a return to authoritarian rule.”⁵⁹ Fifth, pov-

erty—when it leads to festering discontent—and extreme inequalities of wealth (measured as income and/or assets) have been shown to be associated with reversals of democratization in new democracies.⁶⁰ Sixth, the effort to implant democracy in the postsocialist states was undertaken when “liberalism” was understood by locals to mean above all instituting laissez faire economic policies and dismantling the welfare state precisely when its benefits were most needed.

Nancy Bermeo has identified six forms of democratic backsliding, three of which have become less frequent in recent decades. The currently less frequent are: *coups d'état*, *coups by elected officials*, and *electoral fraud*. Bermeo also identified three varieties of backsliding that continue to reverse processes of democratization: *promissory coups* whose putschists nowadays typically “emphasize the temporary nature of their intervention and frame it as a necessary step toward a new and improved democratic order”; *executive aggrandizement*, in which the head of state, typically the prime minister or president, moves at a gradual pace to weaken checks on executive power and expand executive control of the courts, the media, and other institutions; and *strategic electoral manipulation*, “often [con]joined with executive aggrandizement” and involving “a range of actions aimed at tilting the electoral playing field in favor of incumbents.” This last recourse may involve tampering with media, manipulating electoral rules, and preventing opposition candidates from being listed on the ballot.⁶¹ What the practitioners of executive aggrandizement understand, as Bermeo has explained, is that, since democracies are assembled piece by piece, they can be dismantled in the same way.⁶² At this writing, there have been two dramatic instances of democratic backsliding (along the lines of executive aggrandizement) in Eastern Europe, involving Hungary and Poland, both of which had been viewed as democratic success stories and both of which had been admitted to membership in the European Union in 2004. In Hungary, the dismantling of liberal democracy has been engineered by Viktor Orbán (b. 1963), prime minister of Hungary since May 2010, while in Poland the chief engineer of the reversal of the post-1989 democratic gains is Jarosław Kaczyński (b. 1949), who (at this writing) holds no post in government, although he is the leader of the conservative Law and Justice Party. Backsliding in Poland began immediately after the October

2015 parliamentary elections, which Kaczyński's party won. In July 2013—thus, more than two years before the electoral victory of Kaczyński's Law and Justice Party (PiS)⁶³—Adam Michnik, editor-in-chief of the Polish daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*, gave an interview to the German magazine *Der Spiegel*. In the course of this interview, Michnik warned: “If Orbán stay[s] in power in Hungary or if Kaczyński were to win an election in our country, it would be dangerous. Both men have an authoritarian idea of government.”⁶⁴

The Case of Hungary

Between 2000 and 2010, the number of Hungarians living below the poverty line crept upward from 3 million people to 3.7 million.⁶⁵ Discontent was widespread and people blamed the government for their misfortune. In April 2010, parliamentary elections were held and a coalition of Fidesz, headed by Viktor Orbán (who had occupied the post of prime minister during 1998–2002), and the small Christian Democratic party attracted 52.75 percent of the vote, far ahead of the second-place Hungarian Socialist Party (19.31%). Jobbik, a radical nationalist and irredentist party took third place, with 16.88 percent of the vote.⁶⁶ These results gave the Fidesz-Jobbik bloc 68 percent of the seats in parliament, which is to say a “super majority,” meaning that Orbán's coalition could pass legislation without the support of other parties.

Orbán took the oath of office, swearing to uphold the constitution, and then immediately set about replacing the constitution. Among other things, the new constitution, passed in April 2011 by 262 members of the 386-member parliament, defined marriage as the union of a man and a woman and banned abortion altogether.⁶⁷ It also significantly, restricted the jurisdiction of the country's Constitutional Court to matters not affecting the budget or taxes. The new constitution also makes it harder for that court to study laws “in the abstract” to determine whether they are in compliance with the constitution!⁶⁸

The authorities also adopted a new election law, creating new electoral districts with new boundaries. By engaging in flagrant gerrymandering, the authorities made it highly unlikely that any party other than the

ruling Fidesz party could ever win another election for the foreseeable future. As Kim Lane Scheppele reported, “A respected Hungarian think tank ran the numbers from the last three elections, using the new district boundaries. Fidesz would have won all three elections, including the two they actually lost.”⁶⁹

But that was just the beginning. Already by the end of 2010, the parliament approved 191 new laws, enacting a further 213 laws in 2011—a legislative record in Hungarian history.⁷⁰ Among the laws passed were a bill to deregister all but 14 of the 358 religious associations in Hungary,⁷¹ though the list of permitted religious associations was later expanded under pressure to 32,⁷² and Law No. CCIII of 2011 reducing the number of seats in the parliament from 386 to 199 and changing the boundaries of electoral districts.⁷³ Subsequently, voting procedure was “refined” with passage of a law requiring that voters register to vote before the elections are actually held—a move the opposition parties construed as designed to discourage poorer voters from exercising their franchise.⁷⁴ Before the end of 2011, the Fidesz-dominated parliament also passed a law lowering the mandatory retirement age for judges from seventy to sixty-two, and forced 236 judges to retire within the month. The Constitutional Court ruled that the new law lowering the retirement age was unconstitutional, but Orbán defiantly declared, “The [new] system is here to stay.”⁷⁵ In response, the European Commission initiated legal proceedings against Hungary, pointing out that, by undermining the independence of the judiciary, the government and parliament were in violation of EU treaties.⁷⁶ Subsequently, in March 2013, Viktor Orbán’s coalition amended its own constitution—for the fourth time in three years—further limiting the Constitutional Court’s ability to review new legislation.⁷⁷ Some time later, the Hungarian government filled the Constitutional Court with Fidesz-friendly judges, effectively ending the independence of the highest court in the land.⁷⁸

Fidesz enacted legislation to tighten its control over the Central Bank, pressured NGOs receiving funding from abroad and passed a law criminalizing homelessness.⁷⁹ The Fidesz-controlled parliament also passed a new media law in December 2010, modifying the law in some particulars three months later. The law established a powerful Media Council to supervise the media, required that journalists respect “public morality”

and “human dignity,” albeit without defining those terms, and offered no assurance that the confidentiality of journalists’ sources would be respected.⁸⁰ By the end of 2011, the Media Council had ordered Klub Rádió, the only opposition radio station in Hungary, to terminate broadcasting; by then, an EU task force had been appointed to study the media law and its effects.⁸¹ In this classic example of executive aggrandizement, dismantling the free media “piece by piece,” Orbán’s government established absolute control over all public media, dismissed journalists, introduced punitive fines for infractions of the new media law, revoked licenses, and denied radio frequencies to potentially maverick stations.⁸² Through the Media Council, Orbán has been able to control even minor appointments in the media sector, and by 2014 the regime was setting its sights on internet publications, especially HVG, an important independent online news magazine.⁸³ As the *New York Times* reported in September 2014,

The restrictions on media freedom have had an enormous political impact. By the last general election, in April, the government had effectively reined in all of the country’s broadcast media outlets. The major newspapers covered Mr. Orbán’s ruling Fidesz party favorably. Talk radio and television news stations gave disproportionate time to government representatives, and their coverage of opposition parties focused chiefly on corruption and infighting.⁸⁴

The Orbán regime kept up the pressure on the media and had a particular interest in silencing the liberal newspaper *Népszabadság*, according to the paper’s editor, András Murányi.⁸⁵ *Népszabadság* had earned a reputation for being critical of the Fidesz government. But in October 2016, Mediaworks, the company which had acquired the newspaper the previous year, shut down the paper without forewarning, prompting massive protests in Budapest.⁸⁶ Its ninety journalists and other employees were simply sacked. But in a not-so-surprising development two-and-a-half weeks later, the owner of Mediaworks sold *Népszabadság* to Opimus Press, a company owned by one of Viktor Orbán’s associates.⁸⁷ Although Mediaworks cited financial losses for its decision to first fire the staff and then sell the newspaper, many Hungarians sus-

pected that the Orbán regime was behind these moves.⁸⁸ That same month, Hungary's second opposition newspaper, *Népszava*, was likewise sold—in this case, to a Swiss concern.⁸⁹ The newspaper subsequently printed Orbán's war cry, "Let's stop Brussels!" Other hostile takeovers in the media scene have included the once-liberal website Origo, now in Orbán's camp, and *Figyelő*, a business weekly which was at one time independent but is now owned by Maria Schmidt, an Orbán ally.⁹⁰

While EU ministers wrung their hands over these changes in Hungary, there were moves suggesting an incremental posthumous rehabilitation of Regent-Admiral Miklós Horthy (1868–1957), who had brought Hungary into alliance with Adolf Hitler. In mid-May 2012, for example, a statue of Horthy was unveiled in the town of Kereki, followed by the restoration of a marble plaque honoring Horthy at the Reformed College of Debrecen.⁹¹ About the same time, the mayor of Csókakő, a village lying to the west of Budapest, flanked by about a thousand Hussars on horseback, guardsmen in camouflage uniforms, war veterans, and extreme-right politicians, unveiled a large outdoor bust of the regent.⁹² With the EU failing to persuade the Orbán regime to relent, the far-right Jobbik party took the statuery rehabilitation of Horthy to Budapest, erecting a statue honoring the Axis collaborator in November 2013, thereby bringing roughly a thousand Hungarians onto the streets of Budapest in protest.⁹³ Jobbik had previously registered its demand that the territorial provisions of the 1920 Treaty of Trianon be reversed!⁹⁴

With Orbán at the helm, anti-Semitic, homophobic, transphobic, Islamophobic, and anti-Roma hate speech has spread unchecked, while paramilitary groups attired in black uniforms have marched through Roma neighborhoods, harassing and terrorizing local residents.⁹⁵ In addition, the Orbán government introduced a national curriculum for the schools, placing textbook selection under government control. Since 2010, the Orbán government has repeatedly been taken to task by European organizations—the European Federation of Journalists (in connection with Hungary's law on the media),⁹⁶ the European Court of Human Rights (in connection with Hungary's heightening of surveillance over its citizens via a law passed in 2011),⁹⁷ the European Court of Justice (for a law discriminating against certain service providers),⁹⁸ and members of the European Parliament for Orbán's decision to block an

EU-wide agreement on LGBT rights.⁹⁹ Orbán seemed unfazed by this steady barrage of criticism and, in March 2016, arranged for the Hungarian parliament to allow him to spend beyond the budget without parliamentary approval and without having to reveal where the funds would come from.¹⁰⁰

Although some observers of Hungarian affairs were taken by surprise, Orbán had explained his vision already on 5 September 2009, in an important speech. In a key passage, the once-and-future prime minister pledged,

Today it is realistically conceivable that in the coming fifteen–twenty years, Hungarian politics should be determined not by the dualistic field of force bringing with it never conclusive and divisive value debates, which quite unnecessarily generate social problems. Instead, a great governing party comes in place, a central field of force, which will be able to articulate the national issues and to stand for these policies as a natural course of things to be taken for granted without the constantly ongoing wrangling.¹⁰¹

Five years later, a confident Orbán returned to the theme of his vision for Hungary, declaring his intention to build an “illiberal state” (his expression) on the Russian (Putinesque) model. The *Moscow Times* celebrated the obvious in headlining an article on Hungary with the assertion, “Hungary’s Viktor Orban walks in Putin’s footsteps.”¹⁰² Indeed, as György Péteri noted in 2014, Viktor Orbán succeeded within the space of just four years in “introducing and cementing an authoritarian, rightist, Christian-nationalist regime.”¹⁰³

In the course of a reform that had been carried out since 2010, electoral rules from Germany, Britain, and Greece and other states had been adopted to produce a result not anticipated, let alone intended, in those three states. With the addition of “blatant gerrymandering,” the result, as Scheppele has noted, is “a Frankenstate, a form of government created by stitching together perfectly normal rules from the laws of various EU members into a monstrous new whole, ... produc[ing] abnormal results.”¹⁰⁴ The result is that, when fresh elections were held in April 2014, in which Orbán’s Fidesz party won 45 percent of the vote, which is to

say, less than half of the total ballots cast, Fidesz nonetheless obtained two-thirds of the seats in the parliament. This qualifies as a “super-majority,” meaning that Fidesz scooped up enough seats to be able to pass legislation without the support of any other party. Ironically, given this result, support for Fidesz had actually dropped from more than 2.7 million votes in 2010 to less than 2.3 million in 2014. Moreover, Jobbik won 21 percent of the vote, a slight increase from its 2010 showing.¹⁰⁵ The result was, nonetheless, enough to embolden Orbán, who would later take a stand against immigration, incarcerating unfortunate refugees in internment camps,¹⁰⁶ and declaring that he was committed to preserving ethnic homogeneity in Hungary.¹⁰⁷

With the independent media either shut down (as in the case of *Nepszabadsag*) or taken over, and with NGOs with foreign funding placed under pressure, Orbán turned to the one remaining bulwark of liberal thought—Central European University (CEU), a world-class university founded in Budapest by billionaire George Soros in 1991, with more than 1,400 students from 108 countries enrolled in 2017.¹⁰⁸ At the start of April that year, by a vote of 123 to 38, the Hungarian parliament passed a law requiring that CEU, being registered in New York state, open a campus in the United States no later than September 2017, if it wished to continue to operate in Hungary. This Kafkaesque stipulation was transparently intended to force CEU to shut down or—as pointed out by the Minister of Education László Palkovics a week later, to compel the university to issue its degrees in partnership with a Hungarian sister institution—a “loophole” which, as the *New York Times* observed, would mean that “Central European [University] would no longer be an international university operating in Budapest but an American university operating through a Hungarian partner.”¹⁰⁹ Defying protests by academics from across Europe and North America, as well as demonstrations by tens of thousands of people, including many young people, on the streets of Budapest, Hungarian president János Áder signed the bill into law on 10 April, provoking further protests by tens of thousands of outraged Hungarians on the streets of Hungary’s capital.¹¹⁰ Regardless of which of these “solutions” might be accepted—in fact, neither is acceptable to CEU—the law grants the Hungarian government “the power to deny work permits to faculty members from outside the European

Union and use the visa system to restrict the university's ability to choose its students."¹¹¹ In an article for the *New York Times*, Michael Ignatieff, the rector and president of CEU, wrote that the government's aim, with this legislation, was "to send a chill through Hungarian higher education and eliminate one of the few remaining institutions in Hungary that can stand up to the government."¹¹²

It did not take long for a strong international reaction to come. Already on 5 April, the German government registered its concern about the new law.¹¹³ In addition, more than 400 international authors, artists, and scholars signed a letter protesting the law.¹¹⁴ The EU Commission also voiced concern and promised to investigate possible violations of EU legislation.¹¹⁵ On 22 April, the conservative fraction in the European Parliament threatened to expel Fidesz from its ranks.¹¹⁶ Four days later, echoing the concerns of Hungarian NGOs, the European Commission issued a formal statement, declaring that "the law is not compatible ... with the right of academic freedom, the right to education and the freedom to conduct a business as provided by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union."¹¹⁷

Even before the passage of the law on higher education, the International Federation for Human Rights had warned that the country's new constitution, together with more than 600 laws and regulations passed since Viktor Orbán took the reins in 2010, have adversely affected human rights in Hungary. "If no action is taken" against Orbán and Fidesz, the Federation warned, "it is the whole European Union project as a community of values which is put into question."¹¹⁸

In November 2017, a Publicus poll found that 54 percent of Hungarians wanted to see an end to the Orbán-Fidesz regime.¹¹⁹ Five months later, the regime announced the official results of the latest election, claiming a decisive victory and securing two-thirds of the seats in parliament.¹²⁰ Tens of thousands of Hungarians gathered on the streets of Budapest to protest what they called a rigged election. Unimpressed with the resistance to his autocratic rule, Orbán vowed to take revenge on those he considered "enemies." Symptomatic of the postelection mood, a number of judges resigned from the National Judicial Council and the Open Society Foundation, an NGO funded by billionaire George Soros, announced that it would close its office in Budapest.¹²¹

The Case of Poland

Although the Polish economy as a whole was doing well in the run-up to the October 2015 parliamentary elections, poverty may nonetheless have been a factor affecting the outcome of those elections. Poverty remained at 17 percent or higher during 2009–13¹²² with an estimated 1.4 million Polish children below the poverty line in 2014.¹²³ In such circumstances, discontent among poorer citizens, together with a growing skepticism about both the European Union and liberal democracy as such, is thought to have played into the hands of the conservative PiS,¹²⁴ as did the fervent Catholicism of a section of the population. Going into the election campaign, PiS promised to halt the privatization of the economy (accomplished by February 2016¹²⁵), lower the retirement age (accomplished in November 2016¹²⁶), and boost economic growth to 5 percent annually (not accomplished in 2016, when Poland registered GDP growth of less than 1%¹²⁷). PiS also pledged to increase government control of the economy, tax local banks, increase public spending, and keep Poland out of the euro single currency zone. The results of the election gave PiS a commanding lead, with 37.6 percent of the vote, well ahead of the second-place Civic Platform (PO)¹²⁸, which had been the dominant party in the parliament since 2007 and which received 24.1 percent of the vote. Beata Szydło (b. 1963), vice chairman of the Law and Justice party and mayor of Gmina Brzeszcze before being elected to the Sejm in 2005, took office as prime minister on 16 November 2015. Andrzej Duda (b. 1972), also associated with PiS, had been elected president of Poland in May 2015. Jarosław Kaczyński, party chairman who had served as prime minister from July 2006 to November 2007, remained a member of the Sejm but did not assume any executive office.

The Constitutional Tribunal and Supreme Court

Kaczyński met with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán several times in the course of the succeeding months, apparently drawing lessons from Orbán's example. The PiS government's first priorities were the courts and the media, and by the end of December, PiS had succeeded

in passing new laws affecting both sectors. PiS's first target was the Constitutional Tribunal, to which the previous Civic Platform government had appointed five new judges to fill vacancies on the fifteen-member judicial body. Incoming President Duda refused to swear in the five appointees and, in November, the PiS-dominated parliament declared those appointments invalid and presented its own list of replacement judges. But in early December, the existing ten members of the Constitutional Tribunal ruled that the previous government had had the right to nominate three, though not five, judges and called on President Duda to swear in three of the PO appointees. Duda refused even that and instead swore in the five PiS appointees. The ten judges already sitting on the Court replied by ruling that the appointment by PiS of five judges was unconstitutional.¹²⁹ When the Constitutional Tribunal refused to hear cases in the presence of the PiS appointees, the Sejm adopted an amendment to the law on the Constitutional Tribunal in late December 2015, providing that at least thirteen of the fifteen judges on the court must be present in order to hear cases, rather than the previous minimum of five, and that cases must be heard on a first-come, first-heard basis. The court ruled that the amendment was unconstitutional, but the Polish government blocked publication of the court's ruling.¹³⁰ Some 50,000 Poles marched in Warsaw to protest these moves by PiS, with tens of thousands participating in similar marches in other cities across Poland.¹³¹ Ignoring both the protests and criticism from the European Union, President Duda signed the bill into law at the end of December. As protest marches organized by the newly established Committee for the Defense of Democracy continued, public television reported that a recent opinion poll had found that more than half of Poles believed that democracy in their country was threatened.¹³²

In the course of 2016, the Polish parliament passed eight separate laws concerning the Constitutional Tribunal, effectively weakening its ability to hold either the government or the parliament to account. Andrzej Rzepliński, president of the Constitutional Tribunal, did his best to resist what he considered unconstitutional laws, but the standoff between the PiS-controlled parliament and Rzepliński ended in December 2016, when the latter had to step down as president of the Tribunal. He was replaced by Julia Przyłębska, the wife of the Polish ambassador to Ger-

many, regarded as friendly to PiS.¹³³ With that, PiS succeeded in completing its takeover of all three branches of the government. However, her nomination was immediately challenged by constitutional lawyers, who claimed that, under the provisions of the constitution, Stanisław Biernat, the vice chairman of the Constitutional Tribunal, should have inherited the post.¹³⁴ Ignoring that challenge and seeking to build on the installation of Przyłębska as chief justice, Poland's attorney general asked the Constitutional Tribunal to review the appointment by the now-opposition PO of judges Stanisław Rymar, Piotr Tuleja, and Marek Zubik to its own body in 2010.¹³⁵ That PiS would seek to remove three judges appointed five years before it came to power shows the extent of its ambition not only to control the Constitutional Tribunal, but even to remove any dissenting voices from that body.

Given the questionable legality of Przyłębska's appointment to head the Constitutional Tribunal, the matter was brought before the country's Supreme Court. However, in early March 2017, before the Supreme Court could review Przyłębska's appointment, PiS challenged the constitutionality of Małgorzata Gersdorf's appointment in 2014 as chief justice of the Supreme Court. That challenge failed, and this planned overhaul of the Supreme Court provoked criticism from the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, while Polish opposition legislator Krzysztof Brejza objected that the reorganization of the court would end the independence of that judicial body.¹³⁶ Judges throughout Poland also responded, going on a symbolic thirty-minute strike from their work on 20 April 2017, to register their own objections to PiS's effort to assert its control over the Supreme Court.¹³⁷ As for Gersdorf, she challenged the PiS regime head-on in December 2017, accusing the government of staging a coup against the judiciary with the passage of legislation that intended to tighten the government's control of the judicial system.¹³⁸

One of the laws passed in December 2017 lowered the mandatory retirement age for judges to sixty-five, which would have required Gersdorf's immediate retirement, even though her six-year term had not expired. In protest of the December legislation, Dariusz Zawistowski resigned as president of the National Council of the Judiciary, which oversees the country's judicial system.¹³⁹ EU spokespersons called the

latest Polish legislation concerning the judiciary “a danger for Europe.”¹⁴⁰ The European Commission presented a set of recommendations to Warsaw, setting a deadline of 20 March for the Polish government to respond. Under pressure from the Commission, as well as from the Council of Europe’s anticorruption office, Warsaw promised, in April 2018, to modify some of its judicial reforms. Warsaw, however, insisted on retaining the president’s discretionary power to appoint and extend the mandates of judges on the Supreme Court.¹⁴¹

The Media

But what if the media could publish more favorable reports on the PiS government’s work? In early December 2015, Kaczyński reassured a crowd with these words: “We won the election, but we have no right to set laws and remodel Poland.”¹⁴² But Ryszard Terlecki, head of PiS’s parliamentary caucus, declared about the same time, “If the media criticises [sic] our changes ... we have to stop it.”¹⁴³ The government moved forward quickly with preparation of a new law regulating the media. Among the changes: first, a National Media Council was established, on the Hungarian model, authorized to supervise content and hiring, with members appointed by the parliament and the president; and second, the minister of the treasury henceforth was granted full authority to fire and replace senior broadcasting officials.¹⁴⁴ Once again, Poles took to the streets in protest but, ignoring the protests, Duda signed the bill into law in early January 2016. Subsequently, in December 2016, the Constitutional Tribunal ruled that the law on the National Broadcasting Council was unconstitutional “in part.”¹⁴⁵ In the meantime, the government “cut off both public and private funding” to *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the most important independent newspaper in the country, inducing the editor-in-chief to appeal to the European Union for assistance.¹⁴⁶ Choking off funding, especially advertising funding, is the way contemporary authoritarian regimes typically seek to suppress independent media. In this regard, Serbia’s strongman Slobodan Milošević (1941–2006) was old-fashioned, since, with media he considered “wayward,” he preferred to either take over their facilities or simply shut them down.¹⁴⁷ The Pol-

ish parliament also imposed restrictions on journalists' access to its chambers,¹⁴⁸ although sustained protests by the public forced the ruling party to relent and to reinstate journalists' unhindered access to parliament.¹⁴⁹ Once again, Poles took to the streets of Warsaw to protest the new regulations governing the media, as well as to demonstrate their solidarity with Judge Rzepliński.¹⁵⁰

This time, the EU reacted more forcefully than it had when Hungary had passed similar measures. Frans Timmermans, the EU Commission's vice president in charge of issues related to the rule of law, warned on 30 December 2015: "Freedom and pluralism of the media are crucial for a pluralist society in a member state respectful of the common values on which the union is founded."¹⁵¹ Apparently unfazed by EU pressure, the government set to work on a bill to limit foreign (chiefly German and U.S.) investment in the media sector, thereby making Polish media more dependent on the largesse of the PiS-controlled government.¹⁵²

*Reopening the Smolensk Crash Investigation,
Fighting with Tusk*

Earlier, on election day, a triumphant Jarosław Kaczyński had reassured Poles: "There will be no vengeance, no personal conflicts, no getting even, no kicking of those who fell [from power]—even if they fell because of themselves and rightly so."¹⁵³ But in early February 2016, the Polish government launched a fresh investigation into the 2010 air crash in Smolensk, in which then-president Lech Kaczyński, Jarosław's brother, and ninety-five other military, ecclesiastical, and other dignitaries lost their lives. An official inquiry at the time had concluded that the crash was due to pilot error, when the pilot tried to land in dense fog, with Russian air traffic control also contributing to the tragic outcome. However, the defense minister in the post-October government, Antoni Macierewicz, claimed that the crash followed a mid-air explosion. While some officials asserted that there was "hidden evidence pointing to Russian involvement," the real target of the renewed inquiry was former prime minister Donald Tusk of the Civic Platform. As the government prepared to put five of Tusk's former colleagues on trial for complicity

in letting Russia take the lead in the previous investigation, there were insinuations that Tusk himself could be put on trial for covering up what was now described, by PiS officials, as a Russian plot to kill Kaczyński and the other dignitaries on board the doomed aircraft. Minister Ziobro offered his own verdict on Tusk, in advance of a possible trial, speculating that “*In all certainty*, Tusk is responsible for many injustices, starting with Smolensk.”¹⁵⁴ If Tusk or even his aides could be found guilty of a cover-up—assuming that the trial would be credible in the eyes of the Polish public—it would severely damage the future electoral prospects of Tusk’s party, which has been the chief rival of the Law and Justice party for more than a decade.

Amid conspiracy theories blaming the Russians for the crash that killed President Kaczyński in 2010, Polish authorities pressed for exhumations. By mid-September 2012, four victims of the plane crash at Smolensk had been exhumed and, in mid-November 2016, the bodies of the late president and his wife were likewise exhumed.¹⁵⁵ Finally, in April 2017, the commission investigating the crash released its report, alleging that “Russian air traffic controllers deliberately misled Polish pilots about their location as the presidential plane was approaching the runway of the Smolensk military airport in 2010,” and that the plane was destroyed by “a mid-air explosion.”¹⁵⁶

Meanwhile, Donald Tusk let it be known, in February 2017, that he would like to stay on for a second term as president of the European Council.¹⁵⁷ The following month, Tusk was reinstated for a second term, with members of the European Council voting 27 to 1 for his reinstatement, with only Poland voting against him. Jarosław Kaczyński immediately characterized the vote as an attack on Poland!¹⁵⁸

Targeting Lech Wałęsa

Remember Kaczyński’s pledge that there would be “no vengeance, no personal conflicts, no getting even.” Back in 1992, the aforementioned Defense Minister Macierewicz had published a list of about sixty suspected agents of the communist-era secret police; included on the list was the nom de guerre “Bolek,” whom Macierewicz identified as none

other than Lech Wałęsa, the hero of the Independent Trade Union Solidarity and president of Poland from 1990 to 1995. A special vetting court cleared Wałęsa of that charge in 2000. But Lech Kaczyński, during his term as president of Poland (2005–10), revived the charge. Wałęsa filed a lawsuit against his accuser, but withdrew the suit when his accuser died in the Smolensk air crash.¹⁵⁹ In mid-February 2016, PiS officials revived the case, charging that Wałęsa had been a paid agent of the Służba Bezpieczeństwa (Security Service, SB), and produced documents which they claimed to have found in the house of the late Czesław Kiszczak (1925–2015), the last communist minister of the interior, as well as a handwritten note from 1974, allegedly retrieved from the archives at the Institute of National Remembrance. Among the documents were receipts for payment, signed by “Bolek,” with Wałęsa’s purported signature appearing on a key document.¹⁶⁰ The problem is that the signatures were most likely fake and the documents were almost surely forged.¹⁶¹ In fact, it was by no means uncommon for SB police to forge documents, whether to claim credit for having recruited an informant and thereby seek a boost in rank and/or salary, or in order to tarnish the name of the person listed as an SB collaborator.¹⁶² Wałęsa did admit that he had signed a document at one time, agreeing to provide information to the SB, but he has insisted that he did not inform on anyone.¹⁶³ Wałęsa was, in fact, famous for speaking elliptically and, when it served his interests, for wasting people’s time with vacuous pleasantries. It might well be that this is how he “waltzed” with the SB. In any event—to repeat—he was cleared of any collaboration by a Polish court in 2000. But that was not the end of the story, as the Institute of Forensic Research in Kraków announced in late January 2017 that it could confirm that Wałęsa had collaborated with communist-era authorities in the 1970s.¹⁶⁴ Wałęsa immediately shot back, denouncing the report as “politically motivated.”¹⁶⁵

What is at stake in this pursuit of Wałęsa is twofold. First, in the wake of the October 2015 elections and as PiS moved to establish its control of the Constitutional Court and to rein in the media, Wałęsa called PiS “a threat to Polish democracy,” calling for early elections.¹⁶⁶ Second, Wałęsa is widely regarded as the leading figure in the anticommunist revolution of the 1980s and, thus, as the “father” of postcommunist

Poland. If Poles could be persuaded that Wałęsa had been a paid agent of the SB—whether or not there is any truth to the allegation—then the quarter of a century that followed the Roundtable Talks of early 1989 could be construed as involving at best a partial revolution. This would allow Jarosław Kaczyński to present himself and his deceased brother as the true fathers of a “newly” independent Poland, leading “a national-conservative revolution” committed to Catholic values and launched in October 2015. In any event, the allegations against Wałęsa provoked widespread outrage. In Warsaw, at least 15,000 persons—80,000, according to the opposition—assembled on the streets of Warsaw in February 2016 to protest against the government and express their solidarity with Wałęsa; several thousand protesters demonstrated in Gdańsk in support of the former Solidarity leader.¹⁶⁷

Abortion

Until 1956, abortion was illegal in Poland unless a court found that the pregnancy was the result of rape or incest, or when recommended by a physician. But in April of that year, the law was changed, to allow any woman eighteen years of age or older to obtain an abortion during the first trimester of pregnancy, for broadly defined “social” reasons.¹⁶⁸ From then until 1960, a woman seeking an abortion because of her economic situation or other social circumstances had to present proof; after 1960, this requirement was often relaxed. In 1973, the parliamentary Commission on Health and Physical Culture studied the law and reviewed its consequences, and concluded that it was not necessary to change the law. In 1980, a publication of the Central Statistical Office in Poland estimated that there had been as many as 400,000–450,000 abortions annually in the preceding years.¹⁶⁹ Less than a decade later, as communism crumbled, the Church pressed sympathetic deputies in the Sejm to adopt a new, more restrictive law regulating abortion. The Polish public was drawn into a nationwide debate. An opinion poll conducted in November 1990 found that only 13 percent of respondents favored a total ban, with penalties for violations, while 26 percent thought that low income and the presence of a large number of children should be accepted

as legitimate reasons for abortion; 23 percent thought that abortion should be available “virtually” on demand.¹⁷⁰

The Catholic Church’s standpoint, both then and now, has been that abortion is never justified, not even when the woman’s life or health is endangered by continuation of the pregnancy. The reason presented by the Church was that abortion was contrary to God’s law. Given the religious reason for the Church’s demand, the question which was confronted consciously by Poles at the dawn of the 1990s was “whether the state should legislate for all citizens on the basis of the teachings of one particular faith” or rather leave it up to the Church to impose spiritual penalties for infringement of its proscription of abortion.¹⁷¹ An initiative to hold a referendum on abortion, supported by 75 percent of Poles according to an April 1991 poll, was successfully blocked by the Church and, by February 1993, a new law was in place allowing abortion in only four instances: rape, incest, danger to the woman’s life or health, and irreparable damage to the fetus. Subsequent efforts to liberalize this law failed.

Fast-forward to October 2015, with the parliamentary election in which the conservative PiS gained a clear majority. From the Church’s perspective, this looked like an opportune time to revisit the question of abortion and, in March 2016, the Polish Episcopate published a letter in which it described the 1993 law as a “compromise” and demanded a blanket ban on all abortions, regardless of the circumstances. Prime Minister Szydło now let it be known that she too favored a total ban without exceptions.¹⁷² However, an opinion poll published that month revealed that 87 percent of Poles favored allowing abortion when continuation of the pregnancy endangered the woman’s life.¹⁷³ During much of 2016, rival pro-choice and pro-life marches were staged across Poland. The pro-life group “Stop Abortion” collected 450,000 signatures on a petition demanding a total ban on abortion. On 23 September 2016, the Sejm took up this group’s proposal, a bill mandating jail terms of up to five years for women having abortions, and approved it on its first reading. This provoked widespread outrage. “Even the Catholic Church has drawn back from unequivocal support” for this harsh measure, Natalie Skrzypczak reported at the time. “The bishops have clearly distanced themselves from imposing jail sentences on women under-

going abortions.”¹⁷⁴ On 3 October, braving heavy rain, at least 22,000 women dressed in black marched in the Polish capital, with simultaneous marches and protests in Kraków, Poznań, Szczecin, and Wrocław.¹⁷⁵ Shaken by the scale of the protests, the Sejm rejected the measure on 5 October by a vote of 352 to 58, with 18 MPs abstaining.¹⁷⁶ Although the PiS lawmakers had proven to be more extreme than the Catholic episcopate, they had been forced to retreat by the widespread protests they encountered.

In 2017, the Polish parliament passed a law to make the “morning-after pill” available only by prescription. The law outraged many women, who once again marched through Polish cities, dressed in black.¹⁷⁷ Liberals then presented a proposal to liberalize the abortion law, only to see it voted down in the parliament. When the parliamentarians voted instead to tighten restrictions on access to abortion where fetuses were found to be damaged or to show signs of Down syndrome, Polish bishops applauded the parliament, while thousands of people once again took to the streets to exert pressure on legislators to abandon the bill.¹⁷⁸

Other Legislation

In other legislation, President Duda signed a bill into law on 4 February 2016, expanding the authority of the police and security agencies to obtain access to citizens’ email accounts, social media, and other forms of communication.¹⁷⁹ Once again there were protests on the streets, with tens of thousands of persons expressing their outrage in Warsaw and 35 other cities. These demonstrations did not dissuade the government from its chosen path. And while members of the EU Commission studied the new Polish legislation and discussed how the EU might respond, Viktor Orbán offered his support to his fellow “illiberal” and pledged to block any sanctions the EU might think of imposing on Poland.¹⁸⁰ The Interior Ministry presented a draft antiterrorism law in March 2016, with provisions for “increased surveillance of foreigners, easier procedures for tapping mobile phones, and ... the possibility to immediately expel foreigners,” among other things.¹⁸¹ A year later, a bill banning the hold-

ing of counterdemonstrations within 100 meters of events organized by the Church or the state was signed into law by President Duda.¹⁸²

By April 2017, despite certain measures designed to assist low-income families, such as a family subsidy program and a promise to grant retired persons a thirteenth-month pension,¹⁸³ the Law and Justice party was sinking in the polls. Once clearly more popular than the Civic Platform, by April 2017, an opinion poll showed that 31 percent of citizens surveyed preferred the Civic Platform, with the Law and Justice party trailing with 29 percent.¹⁸⁴

One of the most basic rights in any democracy is the right to free speech. Limiting this right damages a country's democratic prospects. In January 2018, Polish lawmakers passed a bill criminalizing statements that attribute to Poles atrocities committed by, or said to have been committed by, German troops during World War II. In addition, just saying the words "Polish concentration camps" (rather than "German concentration camps in Poland") was made punishable by a fine or imprisonment for up to three years. In addition to the damage done to the principle of free speech, there is the documentation by Jan Gross, professor emeritus at Princeton University, of the murder of a group of Jews by Poles in the village of Jedwabne in the summer of 1941.¹⁸⁵ Signed into law by President Duda in February 2018, the bill was immediately condemned by the government of Israel, as well as by other governments. Adding insult to injury, Mateusz Morawiecki, Szydło's successor in the prime minister's office, claimed that, alongside German and Soviet perpetrators, there were also "Jewish perpetrators" of atrocities in Poland during World War II.¹⁸⁶ It is, of course, characteristic of authoritarian regimes to want to control memory of the past, in other words, when convenient, to seek to introduce fictions, such as "Jewish perpetrators," into the national narrative.

As in the case of Hungary, so too in the case of Poland, the European Union, Council of Europe, and other European bodies became concerned about tendencies in the direction of authoritarianism. In January 2016, the European Commission began to review the new law on the media, the purge of broadcasting staff, and the effort by PiS to fill the Constitutional Court with PiS loyalists.¹⁸⁷ In March, the Venice Commission, an advisory body on human rights for the Council of Europe,

announced that it would study the amended law on surveillance.¹⁸⁸ In July 2016 and again in December 2016, the European Commission submitted “recommendations” to the Polish government, demanding that it respect human rights, including freedom of assembly, media freedom, and women’s reproductive rights.¹⁸⁹ The July recommendations came with a three-month deadline for implementation, while the Commission gave Warsaw a deadline of 21 February 2017 to address the concerns raised in December. However, instead of making at least a show of interest in those recommendations, Warsaw simply ignored them; indeed, adherents of PiS celebrated Prime Minister Beata Szydło’s refusal to “compromise,” which is to say her refusal to honor Poland’s obligations under EU law.¹⁹⁰

Reflecting on political trends in Hungary and Poland in April 2017, the U.S.-based prodemocracy organization Freedom House issued a grim warning: “The spectacular breakdown of democracy in these countries should serve as a warning about the fragility of the institutions that are necessary for liberal democracy, especially in settings where political norms have shallow roots and where populists are able to tap into broad social disaffection.”¹⁹¹

SUBVERTING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

No democracy is invulnerable; one can, indeed, easily identify several crucial pillars of democracy which, in turn, constitute choke points where the subversion of a democracy may be undertaken. As seen already in the cases of Hungary and Poland, an aspiring autocrat seeking to undermine and destroy a democratic system needs to do five things: first, subvert the electoral process (for example, by “gerrymandering,” which is to say redrawing electoral districts to favor the ruling party, as was done in Hungary as early as 2011); second, take control of the highest judicial bodies (accomplished in both Hungary and Poland, in the latter case by the end of 2016); third, weaken or marginalize the independent media or destroy media independence altogether (largely accomplished in Hungary at this writing, and well underway in Poland); fourth, create outgroups and fan hatred of these outgroups (in fact, there has been

rising anti-Semitism in both countries since the current ruling parties came to power¹⁹²); fifth, heighten surveillance (again, accomplished in both countries). Freedom House, which records the progress and erosion of democracy in the postsocialist world, assigned the following rankings for Hungary and Poland in 2009: electoral process (H, 1.75; P, 2.00); independent media (H, 2.50; P, 2.00); national democratic governance (H, 2.50; P, 3.25); and judicial independence (H, 1.75; P, 2.25).¹⁹³ With “1” as best and “7” as worst, these rankings reflect the considerable progress both Hungary and Poland had made in building pluralist systems in the first two decades after the collapse of communism. But Freedom House offered very different rankings for these two countries in its 2018 report, reflecting the status of 2017: electoral process (H, 3.25; P, 1.50); independent media (H, 4.50; P, 3.00); national democratic governance (H, 4.50; P, 4.00); and judicial independence (H, 3.00; P, 4.25).¹⁹⁴ In Hungary’s case, each of these four measures of democracy was lower in the 2018 report than in the 2009 report; in Poland’s case, only the scores for national democratic governance, the media and judicial independence were worse in 2018 than in 2009, with an improved score offered only for electoral process.

The Economist also offers annual rankings of democratic attainment, though not merely for postsocialist countries but for 167 independent states and 2 territories. In its 2017 report, The Economist Intelligence Unit found that there were nineteen full democracies in the world (representing 11.4% of the total), fifty-seven flawed democracies (34.1%), thirty-nine “hybrid” regimes (23.3%), and fifty-two authoritarian regimes (31.1%).¹⁹⁵ Among the full democracies (complete list), one finds all the Nordic countries (with Norway ranked in first place and Iceland in second place), New Zealand, Canada, Ireland, Switzerland, Australia, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Germany (ranked in thirteenth place), the United Kingdom (fourteenth place), Austria (fifteenth place), Malta, Spain, Mauritius, and Uruguay. Among the flawed democracies (partial list), one finds South Korea (in twentieth place), Japan, the United States of America and Italy (tied for twenty-first place), France, Israel, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Poland (ranked in fifty-third place), Croatia, and Hungary (in fifty-sixth place). In commenting on the United States, the 2016 report noted that “Trust in political in-

stitutions is an essential component of well-functioning democracies. Yet surveys by Pew, Gallup and other polling agencies have confirmed that public confidence in government has slumped to historic lows in the US. This has had a corrosive effect on the quality of democracy in the US.¹⁹⁶ Needless to say, then-candidate Donald J. Trump's repeated claims, during the 2016 presidential campaign, that the election was "rigged" against him, alleging also voter fraud and corruption on the part of election officials, could, as CNN noted, "inflict long-standing damage on the US political system itself by eroding trust in the probity of the electoral process."¹⁹⁷

Before taking up the record of American democracy in the most recent years, it may be helpful to recall the six essential components of the classical liberal project—the project defended by U.S. Presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, among others. These are: the rule of law, individual rights, toleration/tolerance of minorities (originally operationalized in regard to religious minorities, later expanded to racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities), respect for the harm principle, equality, and the neutrality of the state in matters of religion. The principles of equality and neutrality of the state in the religious sphere have always been highly problematic in the United States. Historically, where equality is concerned, just think of the long exclusion of the indigenous Amerindian population from citizenship, the Indian Removal Act of 1830 (which forcibly moved all Amerindians living east of the Mississippi River, to locations west of that river),¹⁹⁸ and the theft of their lands, and—where African Americans are concerned—the two centuries of slavery, followed by the Jim Crow laws mandating racial segregation in the southern states (in effect until 1965),¹⁹⁹ and other forms of discrimination, not to mention the attacks on African-American churches by the Ku Klux Klan and other right-wing extremists, occurring as recently as November 2016 (in Greenville, Mississippi). Likewise, although the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (included in the Bill of Rights) barred any form of religious establishment, there are many signs that both the authorities and most of the population consider the United States a Christian country, in spite of the fact that today only 70.6 percent of Americans profess to be Christians.²⁰⁰ The motto "In God We Trust" on American coins, the inclusion of the phrase "one nation under God"

in the pledge of allegiance, and the inclusion of Christian prayers in presidential inauguration ceremonies all betray this obvious fact. Of course, the favoring of one religious tradition over others is also a mark of inequality: to paraphrase George Orwell, all citizens are equal, but some citizens are more equal than others. And not to forget: since the presidency of Ronald Reagan, the richest 1 percent have acquired a steadily greater share of the country's wealth,²⁰¹ with Reagan's touted formula about "trickle-down economics" being translated, in practice, as "trickle-up economics." As already noted, by the earliest 2010s, the wealthiest 10 percent in the United States owned 72 percent of the economy. As Timothy Snyder has pointed out, in the absence of a functioning public health care system, economic inequality has generated a health crisis for many Americans, reinforcing inequality, as the working class and poor struggle with medical bills.²⁰²

Ways to Control Elections

Democracy is premised on civic equality. For American citizens to be truly equal, among other things there should be a close relationship between how they vote and the outcome of elections.

The Electoral College

Equality in the weighting of votes has been undermined from the very beginning through the operation of the Electoral College, which was designed by the Founding Fathers to serve as a council of wise men, but which, in practice, has functioned robotically, in most states assigning all the College votes to a candidate who may have won only 51 percent of the votes in that state.²⁰³ This has contributed several times in American history, including in the 2016 election, to a candidate who won the largest share of votes being declared the loser, and the presidential office being assigned to the candidate who lost the popular vote. Indeed, this was the fifth time that a candidate losing the popular vote nonetheless won the Electoral College, the previous candidates being John Quincy

Adams in 1824, Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876, Benjamin Harrison in 1888, and George W. Bush in 2000;²⁰⁴ curiously, none of these successful candidates were candidates of the Democratic Party.

Superdelegates

Since the early 1980s, unelected “superdelegates” have played a role in choosing the Democratic Party’s nominee for the U.S. presidency. There has been a lot of controversy about the superdelegates, with advocates saying that the superdelegates can help to unify the party around an electable candidate and, as Geraldine Ferraro, the Democratic nominee for the vice presidency in 1984, has suggested, “to determine what is best for our party and best for the country.”²⁰⁵ Detractors point out that the superdelegates are not elected to that role and could potentially swing the nomination to a candidate enjoying less popular support. So far, however, that has not happened. In the 2016 election season, there were 4,051 delegates elected to cast their votes at the Democratic national convention, alongside 712 superdelegates.²⁰⁶

There are three groups of people who become superdelegates: persons serving as Democratic governors, senators, or members of the House of Representatives; members of the Democratic National Committee (DNC; 438 in 2016); and former Democratic presidents, vice presidents, DNC chairs, or Democratic leaders in either the Senate or the House. The superdelegate system was created in the early 1980s in the wake of the 1972 debacle suffered by the Democrats, when their candidate for the presidency, Senator George McGovern, won less than 40 percent of the popular vote, and when Jimmy Carter, elected to the presidency in 1976, failed to win reelection four years later (with just 41% of the popular vote). The idea was that party elders should have a say in determining which candidate would have the best chance at the general election. Although not elected to serve as superdelegates, most of them enjoy that status by virtue of having been elected to public office.²⁰⁷ While it would be difficult, therefore, to claim that the superdelegate system is “undemocratic,” it clearly gives elected officials greater weight, person for person, than ordinary voters in the nominating process.

In July 1918, the Democratic Party downgraded the influence of the superdelegates.

Gerrymandering

Gerrymandering is the drawing of electoral district boundaries in such a way as to pack as many of the opposing party's supporters into a few districts and to spread the supporters of one's own party across as many districts as possible, creating small majorities for one's own party in most districts and leaving the opposing party with huge majorities in just a few districts. This technique is unique to systems with single-member districts; systems operating based on proportional representation, such as Germany, Norway, and Croatia, are immune to this distortion.²⁰⁸ Indeed, in reviewing *Davis v. Bandemer* in 1986, Judge Sandra O'Connor said, "that the only way absolute equality [of treatment] among partisans in a legislature could be achieved would be to establish proportional representation, and that mandating proportional representation would mean a de facto overturning of the single-member district system."²⁰⁹ As numerous observers have noted, the effect of gerrymandering is to disenfranchise voters. In fact, the practice has not gone unchallenged; for example, in 1962, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the new district lines drawn by the state legislature in Tennessee violated the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution.²¹⁰ Two years later, in *Wesberry v. Sanders*, the Court examined congressional districts in the state of Georgia, which had not been redrawn since 1931. As the Court found, the 5th district (Atlanta) had 823,680 residents, while the 9th district (largely rural) had 272,154 residents. Following these reviews, legislative districts were radically redrawn across the country and, by the end of that decade, the problem of disproportionate representation had been reduced.²¹¹ Among other things, the rule was established that congressional districts within any given state should have roughly equal populations.

However, with the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the issue of creative districting to discriminate against African Americans and other minorities arose. Specifically, in North Carolina, following the

reapportionment in 1982, “African-American voters sued arguing that the districts diluted their voting power and ran afoul of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. The court agreed with the plaintiffs and ruled the districting plan invalid.”²¹² Four years later, in the aforementioned case of *Davis v. Bandamer* (1986), the Supreme Court “ruled that partisan gerrymandering was justiciable.”²¹³

But gerrymandering has continued, with recent cases involving, among others, Georgia,²¹⁴ North Carolina,²¹⁵ and Wisconsin.²¹⁶ As already stated, free and fair elections would entail a reasonably close correspondence between the popular vote and the outcome of the elections. In 2008, the Democratic Party won 257 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, against 178 for the Republicans; two years later, the Republican Party won 242 seats, against 193 for the Democratic Party. In the wake of this mid-term election, congressional district boundaries were redrawn in an “egregious” manner in ten states.²¹⁷ The result of this gerrymander was that, in the 2012 elections, congressional seats were distributed in a way which did not reflect the voters’ choices. Princeton University professor Sam Wang ran the election results of 2012 against what they would have been using the district boundaries of 2008. He found that, in North Carolina, for example, where the vote was 51 percent Democratic and 49 percent Republican, using the district boundaries of 2008 would have resulted in the election of seven Democrats and six Republicans; with the new gerrymandered system in place, the result was the election of nine Republicans and only four Democrats.²¹⁸ Indeed, Wang calculated that ten states returned results, which contradicted the will of the people. In effect, the “great gerrymander” of 2012 disenfranchised Americans, by establishing a system with inequality built into the voting system.

The blatant gerrymandering in North Carolina eventually came before the Supreme Court, and in May 2017 that court ruled that the boundaries of two congressional districts violated the U.S. Constitution because they were drawn with racial and partisan considerations uppermost. State legislators even admitted that, in redrawing the boundaries for district 12, “they had meant to secure a partisan advantage for Republicans.” The decisive issue, however, according to Eric H. Holder Jr., who had served as attorney general under President Barack Obama, was

that the new district boundaries took race into the calculation. As Holder put it, “North Carolina’s maps were among the worst racial gerrymanders in the nation.”²¹⁹

Voter Suppression

In April 2017, addressing a convention of the National Action Network in New York, Holder warned that “The most basic [of] American rights, the right to vote, is under siege.”²²⁰ At issue, Holder said, was Republican efforts to keep eligible citizens from voting, whether by requiring voter ID (beyond the voter registration card) or by other restrictive measures.²²¹ Other measures used to strip Democratic-leaning minorities of their ability to vote have included allowing only one day on which to vote,²²² banning convicted felons from voting,²²³ and, in the 2016 election, simply persuading “pro-Clinton ‘African Americans and suburban mums’ ... not to vote,” as disclosed by a senior figure in Trump’s presidential campaign effort.²²⁴ The banning of felons from voting might seem neutral but, in some southern states, the laws on the possession of marijuana are strict. For example, in Texas, possession of less than a gram of marijuana is already a “state jail felony,” meaning that a person convicted of possessing even the slightest quantity of marijuana in Texas will never vote again.²²⁵ In practice, most of those incarcerated for drug offenses are African Americans; as of 2011, 5.3 million Americans were denied the right to vote because of felony offenses; of these 4 million had been released from prison and about one-third were African Americans, embracing 13 percent of all African American men.²²⁶ As of 2016, the United States had incarcerated more people per capita than any other nation, and, of the 2.3 million people currently incarcerated, about 20 percent are in prison for drug-related offenses.²²⁷

The 2016 Election and the Russian Connection

The 2016 presidential campaign was itself unprecedented in many ways, most of them having to do with candidate Trump’s statements. One of

his most controversial statements came in August 2016 when he suggested that “gun rights supporters could take matters into their own hands if Hillary Clinton is elected president.”²²⁸ Equally troubling was Trump’s statement, the previous month, “Russia, if you’re listening, I hope you’re able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing [from Hillary Clinton’s server]. I think you will be rewarded mightily by our press.”²²⁹ The nation’s top intelligence agencies later confirmed that Russian president Vladimir Putin granted Trump’s request, ordering a campaign of hacking designed to influence the outcome of the U.S. presidential election.²³⁰ One might have expected that a candidate who called upon a foreign head of state to hack his rival’s emails and then, a month later, made a statement widely understood to call upon gun rights activists to assassinate his rival, might be disqualified from seeking the presidency. But no action was taken. In fact, the greatest outcry of outrage came, not in response to these two statements, but rather in response to a leaked tape from 2005, showing Trump boasting about being able to touch women inappropriately without their prior consent.²³¹ Within twenty-four hours of the public release of this video, which revealed Trump’s obscene comments about women, WikiLeaks began dumping thousands of Clinton emails, thought to have been hacked by Russian operatives.²³²

In May 2016, reports surfaced concerning Russian hacking of the Democratic National Committee. In late July, the FBI began its investigation into contacts between Trump’s advisers and Russian officials or intelligence operatives.²³³ The following month, the *New York Times* reported that Paul Manafort, then Trump’s campaign manager, had received \$12.7 million in cash from Ukraine’s then-president, Viktor Yanukovich’s pro-Russian party. Manafort also collaborated for years with Oleg Deripaska, a Russian billionaire close to Putin, “to influence politics, business dealings and news coverage inside the United States, Europe and the former Soviet republics to benefit the Putin government.”²³⁴ Trump replaced Manafort in August 2016; in April 2017, Manafort registered with the Department of Justice as a foreign agent.²³⁵

By July 2016, the FBI was “seeking ... to determine how broad a network of accomplices Russia [had] enlisted in attempting to influence the 2016 presidential election.”²³⁶ About the same time, the FBI also obtained

a court order to monitor the communications of Carter Page, then an adviser to presidential candidate Trump. Among other things, it was noticed that Page visited Moscow in July, presenting a speech which criticized U.S. policy vis-à-vis Russia. In addition, Senator Jeff Sessions (R-Alabama) met with the Russian ambassador to the U.S. on two occasions while the presidential campaign was underway. Despite all of this—for reasons that have not been satisfactorily explained—FBI director James Comey announced on 28 October, less than two weeks before the election, that he was reopening the previously closed investigation into Secretary Clinton’s emails.²³⁷ Yet he said nothing at the time about the continuing FBI investigation into ties between candidate Trump’s team and Russian officials and operatives! Indeed, former CIA director John Brennan would later tell members of the House Intelligence Committee that there was clear evidence that Trump’s campaign aides had been in contact with Russian operatives during the election campaign.²³⁸ As the *New York Times* put it later, by reopening the investigation into Secretary Clinton’s emails, the Comey conveyed the impression that Secretary Clinton was immersed in scandal, even as the bureau “was sitting on evidence suggesting alarmingly close relations between Mr. Trump’s campaign and Russia.”²³⁹ Clinton’s wide margin disappeared overnight and Comey’s subsequent announcement, two days before the election, that he had cleared Secretary Clinton for the second time of any wrongdoing proved to be insufficient to reverse the damage he had already done.

In December 2016, Lieutenant General Mike Flynn, who was to become Trump’s national security adviser for twenty-three days, met with Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak to discuss U.S. sanctions against Russia. When, in February, the *Washington Post* revealed that Flynn had misled Mike Pence, the vice president-elect, about his contact with Kislyak, Trump fired Flynn.²⁴⁰ The *New York Times* commented that “Mr. Trump didn’t fire Mr. Flynn ... for chummily discussing American sanctions on Russia with Moscow’s ambassador, or for lying about it. Mr. Trump knew all that for weeks. He fired Mr. Flynn after both of them got caught.”²⁴¹ Meanwhile, the FBI continued its investigation into Russian interference in the U.S. presidential election, an investigation with potential ramifications for how one might judge the legitimacy of

Trump's election. Flynn requested immunity in exchange for his testimony for the investigation, implying both some culpability on his part and that he could implicate others in inappropriate contacts with Russian officials. In early May 2017, President Trump asked FBI chief James Comey to drop his inquiry into Flynn's contacts with Russians.²⁴² Comey refused to do so and, on 9 May, Trump fired Comey as director of the FBI. The *New York Times* reported that "at least a half-dozen Republicans broke with their leadership to express concern or dismay about the firing of James B. Comey,"²⁴³ with Representative Justin Amash (R-Michigan) calling for an independent commission to look into Trump's connections with Russia.²⁴⁴ Shortly thereafter, it was revealed that Trump had contacted Daniel Coats, the director of National Intelligence, and Admiral Michael S. Rogers, the director of the National Security Agency, asking them to deny that there was any evidence of collusion between his campaign team and Russian officials during the 2016 election. Both men refused to do so.²⁴⁵

Meanwhile, the day after firing Comey, President Trump hosted a meeting with Russian foreign minister Sergey V. Lavrov and Russia's ambassador to the United States Sergey I. Kislyak, with whom Flynn was said to have discussed U.S. sanctions. In the course of their conversation, Trump reportedly told the Russians, "I just fired the head of the F.B.I. He was crazy, a real nut job. I faced great pressure because of Russia. [Now] that's taken off."²⁴⁶ Trump wanted to keep the meeting out of the public eye and therefore denied permission to American news outlets to send photographers. However, the Russians brought along their own official photographer, whose photos were posted on Twitter by the Russian Foreign Ministry within minutes of the meeting. Photos showing "the three men laughing together in the Oval Office" were subsequently released by TASS, the Russian official news agency.²⁴⁷ The contrast with the cold atmosphere at Trump's meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, at which the American president refused to shake hands with Merkel, was striking.

A few days later, it emerged that Trump had shared classified information about an Islamic State plot with his Russian guests, without having obtained permission to do so from the allied power that had passed along the information. In fact, so sensitive was this information that American

government officials had decided not to share it with more than a few persons within the U.S. government and not to pass it along to other allies.²⁴⁸ It was immediately clear that the episode might make America's allies hesitate to share sensitive classified intelligence with Washington. The German news service *Deutsche Welle* commented that "A growing number of Americans believe there is little this president is not capable of—this 70-year-old man who acts like a child, who has so little self-control and whose vanity and craving for admiration [have proven] disastrous time and again."²⁴⁹ Before the month was out, former FBI director Robert S. Mueller III was appointed by the Justice Department to head a federal investigation into allegations of Russian meddling in the U.S. presidential election and possible ties between Trump's campaign and the Russians. And James Comey had agreed to testify in an open session of the Senate Intelligence Committee concerning what his own investigation had uncovered, whether concerning Flynn or concerning other aspects.²⁵⁰ By then, growing numbers of people, both in the USA²⁵¹ and abroad²⁵² were telling pollsters that they did not expect Trump to finish his four-year term in office.

The Russian Connection, II

Donald Trump's association with Russia goes back to the 1990s, when Russian criminal elements used apartment units in Trump Tower to launder money. In the late 1990s, Trump was four billion dollars in debt and, after he declared bankruptcy in 2004, the only bank prepared to give him any further credit was Deutsche Bank, "which laundered about \$10 billion dollars for Russian clients between 2011 and 2015."²⁵³ The Russians became more involved in Trump's business in 2006, funding the construction of Trump SoHo and giving the failed real estate developer 18 percent of the profits. Trump's friendship with the Russians was lucrative and, in 2008, Donald Trump Jr. would boast that money was "pouring in from Russia" for a "high-end product."²⁵⁴ Five years later, while showing off a family-owned golf course, Trump's other son, Eric, revealed that the construction of the golf course had been financed by Russian credits.²⁵⁵ Thus, by 2013, Donald Trump, an erstwhile failure

in business, had been rescued by Russia, leaving him seriously in debt to his “friend,” Vladimir Putin.

Once the 2016 presidential election got underway, an estimated 5.8 million fake accounts were opened on Facebook, all operating to support Trump and undermine Clinton and generating tens of millions of supposed “likes” for what was, in essence, a disinformation campaign disseminated by Russian agencies.²⁵⁶ Russian Twitter accounts were also brought to bear, encouraging U.S. citizens to “text-to-vote,” which is not a way to vote. In August 2016, senior U.S. intelligence officials warned then-candidate Trump that Russia would probably infiltrate his campaign team (if it had not done so already) and also advised him that Russia was attempting to meddle in the election.²⁵⁷ Trump’s campaign manager was Paul Manafort, a lobbyist who had served as an adviser to several previous Republican presidential campaigns. As Snyder notes, “As Trump’s campaign manager, Manafort took no salary from a man who claimed to be a billionaire.”²⁵⁸ At least part of the reason is probably that Manafort, who had been paid \$10 million a year from 2006 until at least 2009 by Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska, a close ally of Putin’s,²⁵⁹ had gone on to work for Putin’s friend, Viktor Yanukovich, president of Ukraine from February 2010 to February 2014. Manafort worked in Ukraine from 2005 to 2015 and played a role in Yanukovich’s election as president.²⁶⁰

On June 3, 2016, Donald Trump Jr. received an email from a former Russian business partner of his father offering “dirt” on Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. What the contact offered was to provide documents that “would incriminate Hillary and her dealings with Russia and would be very useful to your father.” Trump Jr. replied within moments: “If it’s what you say I love it.”²⁶¹ A meeting was then set up between Russian attorney Natalia Veselnitskaya and several members of Trump’s team, including Trump Jr., Manafort, and Donald Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner. At this meeting, Veselnitskaya presented Russia’s first bill for its years of assistance to Trump, asking the candidate, if elected, to repeal the sanctions imposed on Russia in 2012 by the United States.²⁶² In addition, Kushner met on several occasions with Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak, on one occasion sneaking him into Trump Tower in a freight elevator and then discussing the option of

setting up a secret channel of communication with Putin. Based on this record, Brian Klaas concludes that there is clear evidence that some members of Trump's team were more than ready to collude with the Russian government in order to win the election.²⁶³

An early "payment" to Russia came in July 2016, when Carter Page, Trump's foreign policy adviser, and J. D. Gordon, another adviser, weakened the part of the Republican platform that had called for a determined response to Russia's involvement in Ukraine.²⁶⁴ Then came the election, which sent shock waves through the ranks of the Democratic Party. Once in office, Trump tried to show his gratitude to Putin by honoring Veselnitskaya's request and trying to lift the 2012 sanctions. The State Department and Congress came together to prevent the new president from moving forward with sanctions relief for Russia. Later, under pressure, Trump reluctantly signed a new sanctions bill but signaled his disagreement. When Putin retaliated by expelling more than 700 diplomats and staff who had been attached to the U.S. embassy in Moscow, Trump declined to respond in kind. On the contrary, he thanked Putin for saving the United States the cost of the salaries for the expelled diplomatic staff.

Over the course of his first year as U.S. president, Trump pulled the United States out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Paris Climate Agreement, the U.N. Global Compact on Migration, and the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization. He even threatened to withdraw from the North American Free Trade Agreement. Taken together, these moves have rendered the country weaker and more isolated—a result no doubt welcome to Putin. Subsequently, in May 2018, the Trump administration imposed heavy tariffs on imports from America's closest allies—the European Union, Canada, and Mexico—and declared its intention to move forward with punitive tariffs on imports from China. The tariffs were expected to hurt American farmers, workers, and consumers; the tariffs also enraged America's closest allies.²⁶⁵ There was only one winner here—the Kremlin.

The Stolen Supreme Court Seat

Having gerrymandered congressional districts and engaged in voter suppression, the Republicans engineered a third strike against American democracy in spring 2016, when, under the baton of Senator Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky), the Senate refused to open confirmation hearings with President Obama's nominee for a vacant seat on the U.S. Supreme Court. Before nominating Judge Merrick Garland for the seat, President Obama consulted with both Republicans and Democrats and confirmed that Garland was highly respected by members of both parties. But the Republicans dragged their feet not only on Garland but on other nominees for judicial appointments. As the *New York Times* reported in June 2016,

By June 2008, the Senate had approved 46 of Mr. Bush's judicial nominees; they confirmed a total of 68 by September. In contrast, Mr. McConnell's Senate has confirmed only 20 of Mr. Obama's judges since Republicans took control in January 2015, the slowest pace since the early 1950s ... As a result of the impasse, there are now 83 vacant federal judgeships nationwide—30 of which have such overwhelming case backlogs that the court system has classified them as judicial emergencies. By comparison, there were only about half as many when the Democrats controlled the Senate in 2008 ... This disgraceful and destructive behavior extends well beyond the judiciary. The current Senate has approved the fewest civilian nominees by a president in 30 years, according to an analysis by the Congressional Research Service. One nominee for an ambassadorship died recently after waiting more than two years for a confirmation vote that never came.²⁶⁶

Earlier, in 2010, when Garland was floated as a possible nominee to the nation's highest court, Senator Orrin Hatch, "the senior Republican senator from Utah, called him a 'consensus nominee' and said there was 'no question' that he would be confirmed with bipartisan support."²⁶⁷ But a "consensus nominee" is not the same as a "conservative nominee." In refusing to consider Judge Garland for the seat on the Supreme Court, the Republican-controlled Senate broke with a long-standing tradition.

The Republicans made the excuse that the president was a “lame-duck” president; but that term refers to the period following the election—in this case, to the period between 8 November 2016 and 20 January 2017—and President Obama had nominated Judge Garland in March 2016. The point of the Republicans’ refusal to consider Garland was that they intended to preserve the court’s conservative majority, even at the expense of showing their contempt for the rule of law. More than two centuries earlier, James Madison wrote (in *The Federalist*, No. 51): “In order to lay a due foundation for that separate and distinct exercise of the different powers of government, which to a certain extent is admitted on all hands to be essential to the preservation of liberty, it is evident that each department should have a will of its own; and consequently should be so constituted that the members of each should have as little agency as possible in the appointment of the members of the others.”²⁶⁸

By nominating Judge Neil Gorsuch, a man known to favor the provision of public funding for religious schools,²⁶⁹ to oppose abortion,²⁷⁰ and to be more favorably inclined to respect “religious exemptions” at the expense of gays and lesbians rather than to support gay/lesbian equality,²⁷¹ President Trump made a consciously political choice. This move not only pleased the religious right that had helped to put him in the White House but also contributed to eroding the prestige of the Supreme Court and to undermining public respect for legal authorities. On 7 April 2017, setting aside the established rule that 60 votes are needed to confirm the appointment of a justice to the Supreme Court, the Republicans pushed through the confirmation of Gorsuch by a vote of 54–45. But in refusing to consider the merits of Merrick Garland and in deciding to abandon the 60-vote rule, the Republicans of the Senate elected to behave undemocratically. In 1996, in an article for the *Journal of Democracy*, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan judged that “no regime should be called a democracy unless its rulers govern democratically. If freely elected executives (no matter what the magnitude of their majority) infringe [upon] the constitution, violate the rights of individuals and minorities, impinge upon the legitimate functions of the legislature, and thus fail to rule within the bounds of a state of law, their regimes are not democracies.”²⁷² The Garland–Gorsuch saga clearly damaged the reputation of the Supreme Court, by making it obvious to the American public

that, contrary to claims of neutrality, the Court does *not* stand above politics and that its decisions may reflect the partisan loyalties of the respective justices.²⁷³

The subsequent nomination and confirmation of Senator Jeff Sessions, who had reportedly said that he “admired” the Ku Klux Klan and had called the the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People “un-American,”²⁷⁴ as attorney general could only further undermine public respect for legal authorities, at a time when police had killed at least 102 unarmed African Americans in 2015 and at least 258 African Americans (of whom 36 were unarmed) in 2016.²⁷⁵ In 2017, police in America shot 987 people, of whom 223 were African Americans; 19 of them were unarmed.²⁷⁶ The fact that only a minority of the police involved in these shootings were charged, let alone convicted, of wrong-doing is, by itself, a clue to the erosion of respect for both individual rights and the harm principle in contemporary America.

Human Rights

Closely associated with equality is tolerance of religious, ethnic/racial, and sexual minorities. In the course of 2016 and 2017, there have been (at least) three groups that have been targeted by some Republicans, including President Trump, as not entirely welcome in the United States: Muslims, Mexican workers lacking a visa or work permit, and members of the transgender community. What do these three groups have in common? What they have in common, of course, is that they are minorities that are not generally well understood. Few Christian Americans know much about Islam and many, even if they are tolerant, may associate Islam in the first place with ISIS, al-Qaeda, and 9/11. But if Christians tend not to know much if anything about Islam, monolingual Anglophones simply do not understand Spanish and are therefore cut off from contact, in certain contexts, with Mexican immigrants; and besides, Mexican culture and traditions have distinctive features, whether we think of mariachi music or the fact that “Mexicans put a high value on hierarchy and structure in business and family matters.”²⁷⁷ As for members of the transgender community, few heterosexuals or gays/

lesbians can understand what it feels like when a person is in “the wrong body”; contact with members of the transgender community offers the prospect of building acceptance, but those who have never known anyone transgendered and have never read anything on the subject, may be inclined to subscribe to largely negative stereotypes.

The Muslim Ban

Just seven days after taking office, President Trump issued his first travel ban, barring Muslims from entering the United States from seven Muslim-majority countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. According to the *Washington Post*, it did not appear that Trump had any business interests in any of those seven states, while certain other Muslim-majority countries, from which terrorists had operated but in which Trump has business interests, were not included on the list.²⁷⁸ A legal challenge from Washington and Minnesota succeeded in obtaining an injunction against the ban, and a 9th Circuit panel unanimously denied Trump’s appeal to have the injunction lifted. Trump then issued a revised executive order, removing Iraq from the blacklist and making other small modifications, but this second ban was blocked by courts in Hawaii and Maryland. It was noted that the ban was in violation of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which banned discrimination against would-be immigrants on the basis of national origin.²⁷⁹

Trump’s efforts to block Muslims from visiting or immigrating to the U.S. had immediate consequences. To begin with, even before Trump had been in office for 100 days, a report issued by the Council of American Islamic Relations documented a 1035 percent increase in anti-Muslim incidents on the U.S. border. The U.S. Immigration and Customs agency was said to be responsible for a number of civil rights abuses. In addition, arsonists set fire to five mosques across the United States between 1 January and 26 March 2017.²⁸⁰ Meanwhile, Trump’s decision to target entire nations affected the tourist industry, with not just potential visitors from Muslim countries but also Britons canceling or deferring plans to take their holidays in the United States. Trump’s effort to obtain a “Muslim ban,” whether eventually successful or not, was projected to

result in a drop in the number of tourists in 2017, potentially up to 4.3 million, and to cost U.S. enterprises \$7.4 billion in lost revenue.²⁸¹ Emirates, the biggest airline company in the Middle East, announced that it would cut back service to five of its twelve U.S. destinations.²⁸²

What is abundantly clear from the fall-out from Trump's two abortive executive orders against Muslim travelers is that they have contributed to an increase in distrust between Christians and Muslims in the United States, as well as on the part of foreign-based Muslims vis-à-vis America. A healthy democracy requires a foundation of trust. When that is eroded, damage is inflicted on the democratic project. Amaney Jamal and Irfan Nooruddin have explained why this is the case:

Generalized trust is important for democracy because it serves three interrelated functions. First, it enhances communal ties, norms of reciprocity, and collective action among the populace. Trusting individuals are more likely to be politically engaged, more likely to care about their communities, more likely to be involved in voluntary associations, more likely to be involved in economic transactions outside immediate networks, and more likely to expand on their networks, personal contacts, and relationships ... According to [Kenneth] Newton, "Trust is probably the main component of social capital, and social capital is a necessary condition of social integration, economic efficiency and democratic stability." In short, trusting individuals are more likely to hold the values deemed important for democracy.²⁸³

The Wall against Mexico

In announcing on 16 June 2015 his intention to seek the Republican nomination for the presidency, Trump made the following claim, "When Mexico sends its people [to the U.S.], they're not sending their best ... They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with [them]. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people."²⁸⁴ Omitted in this slanderous attack on Mexicans is the fact that many Mexicans take jobs which Americans, even high school students, are not willing

to accept, working as bus boys or dish washers in restaurants for low pay, or in menial positions in hotels, or in the fields, picking crops. But Trump stuck to his version of the truth or, in Kellyanne Conway's memorable phrase, to his "alternative facts."

Candidate Trump's—now President Trump's—solution to this non-existent problem is to build a wall along the U.S.–Mexican border and have Mexico pay for it, in spite of repeated and insistent denials by Mexican officials that they would be prepared to contribute even one peso to its construction. The border between the two countries runs 3,201 kilometers (1,989 miles). Even allowing that natural obstacles might reduce the number of miles to be fortified with this "impenetrable" wall, the wall has been projected by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to cost \$21.6 billion,²⁸⁵ and, to no one's surprise, the 2017 budget did not allocate any funds toward the construction of the wall.²⁸⁶

Inevitably, Trump's anti-Mexican rhetoric has affected both Americans' attitudes about Mexicans and Mexicans' view of the United States as a potential holiday destination. Where the former are concerned, the authors of a study, published in the *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*,²⁸⁷ undertook a survey of Americans' views of both Muslims and Mexican immigrants during the Republican primaries. They found that, presented with a 100-point scale placing modern humans at the top of the scale and "ape-like" human ancestors at the bottom, participants in the study "placed Muslims and Mexican immigrants significantly lower on the scale than Americans as a whole."²⁸⁸ They also found that participants who held dehumanizing views of Muslims and Mexican immigrants tended to fear them and to support Trump for president.²⁸⁹ Finally, where Mexicans' interest in visiting the United States is concerned, Trump's anti-Mexican rhetoric and his election have had their predictable effect. In other words, Mexicans who have taken vacations in the United States in the past, or made short trips across the border, have become reluctant to visit the country. Instead of choosing New Orleans, Denver, or Las Vegas as their holiday destinations, they are now looking to take their vacations elsewhere in Latin America, in the Caribbean, or in Europe. By January 2018, Trump's policies had already cost the U.S. tourist industry \$4.6 billion in lost revenue and 40,000 jobs.²⁹⁰ The projected monetary losses are,

among other things, a measure of Mexicans' diminished trust in Americans in the age of Trump.

The Transgender Community

The passage in March 2016 of House Bill 2 in North Carolina came as a direct attack on transgendered persons. Using the entirely implausible argument that people undergo expensive sex reassignment surgery and undergo the trauma associated with crossing over just in order to “prey” on women (or, by extension, men) in public restrooms, Republicans in that state mandated that people should henceforth use the public restrooms corresponding to the gender on their respective birth certificates. In other words, transgender men (including men with beards) would now be required to use women’s restrooms and transgender women would be required to use men’s restrooms.²⁹¹ If there were any truth to the notion that transgender women represent a threat to genetic women, then one would expect that gender neutral restrooms would have a record of violence between men and women. In fact, there are no statistics supporting that idea.²⁹² On the other hand, half-deserted parking structures are potentially dangerous for women, especially at night, but no one would think of banning men from entering parking structures after dark. Meanwhile, the antitrans bill was heating up emotions and in response, some top performers canceled engagements to perform in North Carolina and at least one company canceled plans which would have brought new jobs to the state, while the Charlotte Hornets (a basketball team) and the Carolina Hurricanes (an ice hockey team) issued condemnations of the bill. In fact, public restrooms in the United States have been places of danger *for transgendered persons*, with an estimated 60 percent of transgendered Americans avoiding public restrooms, saying that they had been harassed and assaulted in restrooms.²⁹³ An effort to repeal the bill in December 2016 failed, and by January 2017 proposals along similar lines had been presented in Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Texas, and Virginia, while Michigan’s attorney general joined nine other states in challenging federal guidance “directing schools to grant transgender students access to restrooms and locker rooms that

match their gender identity.”²⁹⁴ If the creation of an “out-group” is a tool in undermining democracy, then the weak and often misunderstood transgendered community in the United States has clearly figured as a designated out-group in certain states. Significantly, among President-Elect Trump’s first appointments was John Gore, a lawyer who had defended racial gerrymandering as well as the transgender “bathroom” bill in North Carolina, to head his civil rights team.²⁹⁵ Later, in February, Trump’s administration withdrew federal protection from transgender students in public schools.²⁹⁶

In 2016, 27 transgender women were murdered in the United States, most of them women of color. Nor are transgender women necessarily safe with the police. “The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey revealed that 58% of trans people who interacted with police who knew or thought they were trans experienced some form of mistreatment, from verbal harassment to sexual assault.”²⁹⁷ In fact, the antitrans bills have it backward: “About 70 percent of transgender people have been harassed in public restrooms, according to a 2013 survey by The Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law. However, there are no confirmed reports of transgender people assaulting any person in a public restroom.”²⁹⁸ It is transgender women who need protection from uncomprehending men and women, not the other way around. And, to say the obvious, transgender people, whether transgender women or transgender men, should enjoy equal treatment and be treated with as much respect as nontransgender people.

Anti-Semitism

After an awkward start to his presidency, in which President Trump released a statement on Holocaust Day in which he failed to mention the genocide of an estimated 6 million Jews at the hands of the Nazis, the president made an effort to correct his course. Thus, in April 2017, he vowed to combat anti-Semitism and, in an overzealous hyperbole, even declared that “Those who deny the Holocaust are an accomplice to this horrible evil.”²⁹⁹ He may be ignorant of the exact meaning of “accomplice”³⁰⁰ and, for that matter, of the need for the noun to agree

with its antecedent in number.³⁰¹ Yet his statement was clearly intended to lay to rest any doubts that may have arisen due to his omission in his statement on Holocaust Day or, for that matter, due to his reported silence in the face of a string of anti-Jewish incidents earlier in the year.

There was disagreement in the press concerning whether or not Trump's negative rhetoric concerning Muslims and Mexican immigrants and his lifting of federal protection which had been in place for transgender students gave encouragement to hatred of minority groups generally, including Jews. In late November 2016, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported that there had been 867 "hate incidents" across the United States in the ten days following Trump's election, and that about 100 of these were anti-Semitic, with the remaining incidents targeting African Americans, Muslims, immigrants, and members of the LGBT community.³⁰² The article reported that the presidential campaign culminating in Trump's electoral victory had seen the rise of the so-called alt-right, a right-wing extremist movement characterized by white racism, anti-immigrant views, and anti-Semitism. As speculation appeared in the press that Trump's election had somehow given license to anti-Semitism, the *Washington Post* responded in mid-February 2017; reviewing data from the first six weeks of 2017, the newspaper concluded that there were "no reliable statistics available to show there's been a rise in anti-Semitism since Trump's election."³⁰³ However, in late April, the *Times of Israel* claimed that anti-Semitic incidents in the United States had increased 34 percent in 2016, during the presidential campaign, and then surged by 86 percent in the first three months of 2017.³⁰⁴

Prejudice, Cognitive Simplicity, and the Attraction of the "Outsider"

It is probably too early to know for certain what Trump's presidency will mean for American Jews and anti-Semitism in the medium term, let alone the long term. But one may suspect that a society which becomes less safe for Muslims and Mexican laborers, and in which a presidential candidate would say of an African American protester at one of his rallies, "Maybe he should've been roughed up,"³⁰⁵ may also become less safe for Jews and other minorities. An article published in

the *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* in 1994 pointed out that “prejudice is not, or is not only, a state of mind. It rests on the solid ground of a collective structure: it returns to and feeds on the average mental climate of a community.” Racism, in short, “implies the existence of a racist community.”³⁰⁶ Racism, and indeed all forms of prejudice including anti-Semitism, homophobia, and transphobia, are closely correlated with “cognitive simplicity,” which includes lazy thinking, reliance on stereotypes, and cogitation in terms of “vaguely-defined categories.”³⁰⁷

Worse yet, lazy thinkers are all too often ready to believe that their opinions about the affairs of the nation or of the world deserve to be treated with equal respect with the views of specialists in political affairs, even if their opinions are based on misinformation, poorly recollected half-truths, or what they think they heard the local florist tell them. In other words, they downplay the importance of real knowledge about politics in making political judgments. It was this misunderstanding about the importance of knowledge (and, for that matter, relevant experience) that made possible candidate Trump’s appeal. Donald J. Trump had never served as governor of any state, had never served in the U.S. Senate, and indeed had never held any political office when he launched his presidential campaign. Nor did he have any credentials suggesting political knowledge or expertise: he had earned his undergraduate degree in economics not in either history or political science. For that matter, according to the *Telegraph*, some of those whom Trump recruited to serve in his “inner circle” of advisers had “no experience in government.”³⁰⁸ And yet he touted this as somehow an advantage. He was “the outsider,” supposedly untainted by the largely undefined ills from which experienced politicians supposedly suffer. Few if any of Trump’s supporters would choose a surgeon lacking training or experience, or a dentist, lawyer, tailor, chef, or priest lacking credentials or experience. What is it about politics, the science of social justice, of the public weal, and sometimes of war and peace, that suggests that a person devoid of any knowledge or experience can do a better job as president than someone with at least some prior experience in political life? In a recent issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Tom Nichols sounded a clear warning:

increasingly, citizens ... want to weigh in and have their opinions treated with deep respect and their preferences honored not on the strength of their arguments or on the evidence they present but based on their feelings, emotions, and whatever stray information they may have picked up here and there along the way.

This is a very bad thing. A modern society cannot function without a social division of labor. No one is an expert on everything. We prosper because we specialize, developing formal and informal mechanisms and practices that allow us to trust one another in those specializations and gain the collective benefit of our individual expertise. If that trust dissipates, eventually both democracy and expertise will be fatally corrupted, because neither democratic leaders nor their expert advisers want to tangle with an ignorant electorate ... And such an outcome is already perilously near.³⁰⁹

Attacks on the Media

Reviewing once again the essential components of a liberal political order, we find that, in twenty-first century America, all six components—the rule of law, individual rights, tolerance, respect for the harm principle, the equality of citizens, and the neutrality of the state in matters of religion—have been eroded in recent years (or, in the case of the neutrality of the state in the religious sphere, for a long time). Although there are still committed liberals in the United States, as well as distinguished liberal media such as the *New York Times* and *Mother Jones*, alongside media championing gay rights such as the UK-based *Pink News*, it is hard, since January 2017, to characterize the United States as a liberal democracy. Indeed, there are reasons to think of the United States rather as an illiberal hybrid state, no longer fully democratic, though not yet authoritarian (at this writing). It may be useful at this point to return to the list of five choke points—subverting the electoral process, taking control of the judiciary, weakening the independent media, promoting fear of designated “out-groups” (Muslims, Mexican immigrant workers, and members of the transgendered community), and heightening surveillance. It is well known that surveillance was

increased in the United States under the so-called PATRIOT Act and the evidence provided above suggests that the Republicans have advanced on all fronts except the independent media; and, where surveillance is concerned, Trump asserted on several occasions during the 2016 campaign that, if elected president, he intended to expand the U.S. surveillance apparatus.³¹⁰ This is precisely the context in which Trump's repeated attacks on the media, and especially on two of the most respected media outlets—the *New York Times* and CNN—can best be understood. Of course, then-candidate Trump could scarcely be happy that the Washington-based Canadian correspondent, Daniel Dale, kept a tally of candidate Trump's lies, reaching a confirmed total of 253 by mid-October 2016. "By Dale's reckoning, Trump's most truthful day included just four lies; at his worst there were 25—and that doesn't include the first two candidates' debates, in which Trump uttered 34 and 33 falsehoods of varying degrees in just 90 minutes."³¹¹ Throughout his campaign, candidate Trump repeatedly disparaged the mainstream media, adopted the Russian term "fake news" to apply especially to the *New York Times*, CNN, MSNBC, ABC News, and CBS News, and on 21 January 2017, the newly minted president repeated his mantra "that reporters are 'among the most dishonest human beings on earth.'"³¹² Obviously, if one cannot suppress critical media, the next best thing would be to undermine public confidence in the media. But then there was Donald Trump's threat, in February 2016, to change libel laws in such a way as to make it easier to sue the media for character defamation. Specifically, he told the assembled representatives of the press that, as president, he would rewrite the libel laws so that people can "sue you like you'd never been sued before." He also condemned the *New York Times* on that occasion as "one of the most dishonest media I've ever seen in my life. The worst."³¹³

In his first 466 days as president, Trump made 3,001 false or misleading claims, according to the Fact Checker's database.³¹⁴ These have included the preposterous claim that the Democrats colluded with the Russians during the 2016 presidential campaign and the utterly false claim that a border wall with Mexico would stop the flow of illegal drugs into the United States, even though much of the illegal drug traffic is smuggled through underground tunnels or simply hidden in the trunks

of cars driving through legal border crossings.³¹⁵ Then there was Trump's claim that the FBI had planted a "spy" in his campaign team—a claim dismissed as a "crazy" fantasy by Michael Steele, the former chairman of the Republican National Committee.³¹⁶ It is important to emphasize here that Trump does not try to offer plausible accounts; on the contrary, the point for him is to advance, day after day, completely absurd, easily refuted arguments, until most people are so exhausted from the endless flow of nonsense that they cease to worry about what is the truth. As Melvin Lerner noted in 1980,³¹⁷ it is psychologically easier to delude oneself into imagining that the world is just than to look squarely at injustice and declare it unacceptable. To be prepared to see the world as it is, one must be prepared to accept what psychologists call *cognitive dissonance*, defined as "the uncomfortable state of entertaining two contradictory ideas at the same time"³¹⁸—in this case, what is and what should be. But when people surrender to the endless production of lies, they lose the ability to believe in truth and, with that, enter the "post-truth" twilight zone, characterized by "a condition where objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief."³¹⁹ The best defense against the alternative reality of "alternative facts," which have nothing to do with reality, is to insist that statements be based on evidence, that a person making questionable statements be challenged to provide unequivocal evidence, and that policy decisions be based on consultation with specialists in the relevant policy sphere.

Americans' trust in the media has been sinking even before Trump gained the presidency; a Gallup poll conducted among 1,020 adults in September 2016 found that only 32 percent of respondents had "a great deal" or "a fair amount" of trust in the media, while among Republicans only 14 percent trusted the media.³²⁰ However, a subsequent poll released in February 2017 found that Americans were polarized along partisan lines, when it came to trust in the media; specifically, 86 percent of Democrat voters said that they had more trust in the media than in claims made by President Trump, while 78 percent of Republicans reported that Trump, rather than the media, "tells them the truth."³²¹ In short, Trump's campaign against the media is having an effect among Republican Party faithful, but further alienating Democratic Party supporters.

Contempt

Throughout his campaign, Trump exuded contempt—contempt for President Obama whom he described in October 2016 as the “quote’ president”³²² contempt for his Republican rivals (employing terms of mockery such as “Low-Energy Jeb,” “Little Marco,” and “Lying Ted”); contempt for his Democratic rival (among other ways, by interrupting Secretary Clinton fifty-one times in their first televised debate³²³); contempt for Muslims (by pledging to block the arrival of Muslims, even Muslim refugees, wanting to enter the United States—a pledge he undertook to carry out almost as soon as he moved into the White House—and by calling for a Muslim registry³²⁴); contempt for Mexicans who had come to the United States illegally in search of work (by promising to deport up to 11 million undocumented workers and to build a wall along the border with Mexico);³²⁵ and contempt for the American people, by running a campaign strong on lies, insults, and attacks on entire groups, and short on constructive proposals to improve or at least maintain the Affordable Care Act, to balance the budget (against his promises to increase spending on infrastructure and slash taxes), or to bring the American people together. Nor should one forget Trump’s verbal attacks on Judge Gonzalo P. Curiel of the Federal District Court in May 2016, at a time when the judge was presiding over class-action suits against “Trump University” and his real estate investment program. In Trump’s eyes, Indiana-born Curiel was a Mexican and a “hater.”³²⁶ In fact, the Great Master of Deceit has contributed to making the United States possibly more polarized than it has been since 1840–77 (the last phase of the antebellum period, the American Civil War, and the Reconstruction). Some of Trump’s supporters took his promises literally, such as California farmers in the Central Valley, who were attracted by Trump’s promises to reduce regulations affecting agriculture and to cut taxes. By February 2017, with the Trump administration seeming to move forward with the deportation of undocumented workers, these erstwhile Trump supporters panicked, realizing that, if they lost their cheap laborers, they would either go out of business or have to hire American citizens at much higher wages.³²⁷ However this might play out, the deportation of millions of undocumented workers, some of them working also as dish-

washers in restaurants in southern California, would result in higher food prices at supermarkets and in restaurants—a result likely to be unwelcome to many Trump supporters.

Other controversial moments included Trump's declaration (in December 2015) that, as president, he would "kill the *families* of terrorists in order to win the fight against ISIS"³²⁸ (a promise he reiterated in January 2016 and again in March 2016);³²⁹ his mockery of Senator John McCain's award of a purple heart;³³⁰ and a boast, by a senior figure in Trump's election campaign, that Trump's election team was actively and systematically engaged in efforts to dissuade African-Americans and suburban mothers from voting, encouraging them to stay at home, rather than to vote for Hillary Clinton for president.³³¹ Then there was the disconcerting spectacle of a rally held by the white supremacist, pro-Trump National Policy Institute in November 2016, at which speakers lambasted Jews, making use of Nazi language and giving the stiff-arm salute. Richard Spencer, the institute's founder, closed his speech with the call, "Hail Trump! Hail our people! Hail victory!"³³² In German, those words would be "Heil Trump! Heil unser Volk! Sieg Heil!"

Also deeply troubling has been the Great Master of Deceit's proliferation of "alternative facts," insisting—in the face of evidence to the contrary—that Hillary Clinton owed her victory in the popular vote to millions of votes by noncitizens; that he drew the largest crowd in history to witness his inauguration; and that Senator Ted Cruz's father had once associated with John F. Kennedy's assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, among other troubling claims. Add to this Trump's insistence that President Obama had Trump Tower bugged during the election—in the absence of any evidence supporting the claim and in the face of FBI denials that Trump Tower had been bugged.³³³ At first sight, it might seem merely odd that the president of the United States would insist on claims most observers regard as absurdities. In fact, however, this insistence is potentially dangerous because it erodes the boundary between verifiable truth and outright falsehood, allowing people to subscribe to narratives that do not reflect reality. Either facts are facts, or they are not facts. The notion of "alternative facts" represents an assault on both factuality and truth itself.

Perhaps President Trump's quintessential expression of contempt for the American people came with his 2018 budget proposal, unveiled while Trump was out of the country for his first foreign visit as head of state. The \$4.1 trillion budget proposed to increase military spending by 10 percent and to allocate \$1.6 billion to begin the construction of a protective barrier against the United States' southern neighbor. In addition, the budget included huge reductions in taxes, especially for the wealthiest class. To pay for this, Trump called for cutting more than \$800 billion from Medicaid, slashing \$192 billion from nutritional assistance to the poor, slicing away \$272 billion from welfare programs overall. Cuts were projected to affect also student loans as well as pension benefits for federal employees, with more than \$72 billion in disability benefits.³³⁴

Law and Order

Trump promised, during his campaign, to get tough on crime in America. That there is a problem with crime is clear enough. Part of the problem is the sheer proliferation of guns in the United States, with 27 million firearms sold in 2016 alone—a record, fueled by Trump's claims that, if Clinton were to be elected, she would make it harder to purchase weaponry. According to the Pew Research Center, there were (as of January 2017) between 270 million and 310 million guns in private ownership in the United States, which had an estimated population of 323,955,528 in July 2016.³³⁵ In fact, according to a study published in the *American Journal of Medicine* in February 2017, as cited by CBS News, "Americans are 10 times more likely to be killed by guns than people in other developed countries ... [Moreover, e]ven though it has half the population of the other 22 nations [studied] combined, the United States accounted for 82 percent of all gun deaths. The United States also accounted for 90 percent of all women killed by guns ... Ninety-one percent of children under 14 who died by gun violence were in the United States."³³⁶ Among the other nations included in the study were Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, Spain, and the

United Kingdom. What does President Trump propose to do to address the problem? First, make sure that guns continue to be readily available to virtually any persons wanting to purchase them; second, against the background of his claim in July 2016 that the “police are the most mistreated people in America,”³³⁷ President Trump signed three executive orders on 9 February, calling for coordinated campaigns to “define new federal crimes, and increase penalties for existing federal crimes,” reduce violent crime, and break up the criminal cartels operating in the United States.³³⁸ Writing an op-ed piece for the *New York Times*, Timothy Egan forecast that Trump’s presidency would see the establishment of a police state in the United States.³³⁹ This opinion was seconded in the pages of *The Atlantic*, which specifically cited Trump’s declaration that he would call for broad use of the controversial “stop and frisk” policy, in which persons who merely look “suspicious” to police are stopped and frisked. In New York, where this policy was in place from 2002 to 2015, a total of 4.4 million stops were recorded, with 88 percent requiring no further action.³⁴⁰ The problem with the term “police state” is that it is vague, and rather like saying that Trump would introduce a “nasty system.” On the other hand, it may be useful to employ the term “democradura”³⁴¹ to describe the United States since the gerrymandered, flawed election of 2012, meaning, by this term, that it is a democracy decaying from within, still preserving some of the formal institutions set up to maintain democracy, but with those very institutions corrupted, politicized, and engaging in behaviors (as per the Republican-controlled Senate) quite foreign to how they were expected to behave in the past. A democradura is not yet an authoritarian regime, and it can, depending on the determination and commitment of the American people, be pulled back to the way its institutions are supposed to function. But it is, as *The Economist* recently called the United States, a “flawed democracy,” verging, I suggest, on becoming a hybrid regime. In this connection, the silencing of Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Massachusetts) on the floor of the Senate on 7 February 2017, by Senate Republicans, when she tried to read a letter from Coretta King, the widow of Martin Luther King, Jr., and a second letter from the late Senator Ted Kennedy (D-Massachusetts), was troubling. Both letters were critical of Senator Jeff Sessions, whom the Republicans were determined to confirm as the incoming

Attorney General. The Republicans cited an obscure rule which states that Senators may not “directly or indirectly by any form of words impute to another Senator or other Senators any conduct or motive unworthy [of] or unbecoming a Senator.”³⁴² But the spirit of the rule was most certainly to prevent the Senators from engaging in exchanges of insults, and not to obstruct serious discussion of one of their number being considered for appointment to a higher post. The “silencing of Senator Warren” was an ominous sign that the spirit of democracy is not alive and well among Republicans. And if silencing opposition voices were to become a fixed pattern in the U.S. Senate, then we would have to conclude that, at that point, American democracy would be dead.

Almost as troubling was Trump’s assertion on his 100th day in office, in an interview with Fox News, that the constitutional system of checks and balances—already undermined by Republicans’ gerrymandering route to control of the Houses of Representatives and illegal seizure of the U.S. Supreme Court—is “a very rough system. It’s an archaic system ... It’s really a bad thing for the country.”³⁴³ If Trump believes that the system of checks and balances is archaic and bad, does he nurture the ambition to scuttle it and, if so, what would he like to see take its place? At this point in history, we need the independent media more than ever.

IS TRUMPISM RELATED TO FASCISM?

In chapter 3, I cited Roger Griffin’s understanding of generic fascism as a political current seeking to construct “an alternative modernity and temporality ... based on the rebirth, or palingenesis, of the nation”³⁴⁴ and specifically glorifying the nation as “shaped by historic, cultural, and in some cases, ethnic and hereditary factors.” With this, fascists prize some version of homogeneity in the nation—usually racial—and want to overcome “the decadence that has destroyed a sense of communal belonging and drained modernity of meaning and transcendence and usher in a new era of cultural homogeneity and health.”³⁴⁵ Accordingly, fascists undertake an all-out assault on truth (perhaps Trump’s repeated smearing of the mainstream press as “fake news” might seem familiar); denigrate nonfascist heroes (I find myself thinking of the way in which

Trump insulted the American war hero, Senator John McCain (R-Arizona); create and/or promote hatred of outgroups (in Trump's case, Mexicans, Muslims, and transgendered persons seem to be less respected); encourage violence against "nonbelievers" (perhaps what has happened at a few of his rallies may seem relevant to some); and place themselves above the law (and here I wonder about Trump's demand that the families of terrorists be murdered, his firing of the FBI director James Comey, his alleged musing about having Robert Mueller III fired as special counsel heading an investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election,³⁴⁶ and allegedly perhaps also his sustained efforts to undermine the credibility of the Mueller investigation).

Trump's paligenetic rallying cry is, of course, his call to "make America great again," thus looking back to a halcyon time when life in America was simple and when the so-called "American dream" seemed to be within reach for most working-class Americans. For the fascists of old, liberalism was an obstruction on the path to rebirth and had to be destroyed; in Trump's case, there seems to have been a comprehensive assault on the legacy of Barack Obama, especially seeking to undermine and eventually destroy the Affordable Care Act, to weaken environmental protection, to weaken protection for sexual minorities, to divert public funding into confessional schools, and to pack the lower courts with conservative and ultra-conservative judges, appointing twenty-seven judges to lower courts by July 2017.³⁴⁷ Mussolini, although serving as prime minister of Italy from 1922 to 1943, preferred to be called *il Duce* (the Leader). Trump, although serving as U.S. president, seems to like to be called *the Donald*—by no means the same thing as *il Duce*, but nonetheless striking.

In 2017, Timothy Snyder published a short book bearing the title *On Tyranny*. In it, he warned about the connection between disengagement from truth and the growth of fascism. "To abandon facts," he wrote, "is to abandon freedom. If nothing is true, then no one can criticize power because there is no basis to do so . . . Post-truth is pre-fascism."³⁴⁸ At the time of this writing (May 31, 2018), no one could reasonably describe the United States as a fascist country, and it would be too much to call Trump a "fascist." Yet he has been compared by former treasury secretary Lawrence Summers to Mussolini,³⁴⁹ by retiring Senator Jeff Flake (R-

Arizona) to Stalin,³⁵⁰ and even, by the London newspaper *The Evening Standard*, to the thirteenth-century Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan.³⁵¹ Venturing into more controversial territory, former president Obama warned in December 2017 that “Americans must be vigilant in their defense of democracy or risk following the path of Nazi Germany in the 1930s.”³⁵²

It is also worth noting that Trump, unlike Hitler even before his *Machtergreifung*, does not have a private militia and, again unlike Hitler, does not have an anti-Semitic agenda. Yet it should be noted that the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis,³⁵³ and other white supremacist groups as well as homophobic hate groups have felt emboldened by Trump’s arrival in the White House, while reported anti-Semitic incidents rose 57 percent in 2017, reaching a total of 1,986 incidents in 2017, versus 1,267 in 2016.³⁵⁴ Finally, in August 2017, Trump proposed that the Department of State remove any reference to democracy from its mission statement.³⁵⁵ The State Department refused to accommodate this request and the department’s website still includes the assertion that “On behalf of the American people we promote and demonstrate democratic values and advance a free, peaceful, and prosperous world.”³⁵⁶ Tellingly, however, references in an earlier incarnation of the mission statement to the importance of “build[ing] and maintain[ing] strong bilateral and multi-lateral relationships” and to “strengthen[ing] traditional alliances”³⁵⁷ have been stripped from the current, much shorter mission statement.

CONCLUSION

As Plato noted more than two millennia ago, no political system is immune to change or even decay. The stabilization of an “ideal” system is the stuff of utopias—or perhaps dystopias. Thomas Jefferson, one of the founders of the United States of America, was especially clear-sighted on this score, when he said that it would be beneficial for the country to have a fresh “revolution” from time to time. His point, I believe, was that laws and institutions which had been set up to protect citizens’ rights and freedoms needed to be renewed and put back on the right track from time to time.

The advocates of the alternatives to democracy reviewed in this book were utopians in their own minds. What the communists, the fascists, and the anarchists wanted was, in each case, to build a better world and, of course, a system that would not change in its fundamentals. Liberal democrats likewise want a better world, but place more emphasis on inclusion of citizens in the process of decision-making than either the fascists or the (Soviet) communists did. Leaving aside the anarchists for the moment, there are three fundamental differences between the fascists and communists on the one hand, and liberal democrats on the other. First, for fascists and communists of the Soviet Union there was no recognition of the private sphere. Dancing the “wrong” dances was problematic in both systems, dressing in American fashions again problematic, and certainly, listening to BBC Radio in the Third Reich or to Radio Liberty in the Soviet Union could lead to trouble. Moreover, as the case of “young Pavlik” showed, in Stalin’s Russia criticizing the authorities even in one’s own kitchen was a punishable offense. By contrast, liberal democratic systems allow a broad latitude for what is considered private.

Second, the fascists, in both their Italian Fascist incarnation and their German Nazi incarnation, like communists of the Soviet bloc (in spite of German communist Rosa Luxemburg’s famous quip that freedom is always the freedom to think differently), did not recognize any right to think differently on matters of importance to the regime. Conformity, not merely in behavior but also in thought, was expected of every citizen—as Czesław Miłosz (1911–2004) noted in his influential book, *The Captive Mind*. By contrast, liberal democracies simply do not care what people are thinking; of course, when harmful fantasies are translated into actions harmful to other people that is unacceptable in any system. Third, by imposing strict controls on research of any kind, on the arts, and on science, fascist and communist regimes set limits to the growth of knowledge, to what people were allowed to imagine, to progress itself. I think here of how, in Husák-era Czechoslovakia (1969–87), it was not possible to engage in any serious research on the Middle Ages, while, on the other hand, university students were encouraged to study the history of the workers’ movement.

The greatest advantages which liberal democracy has over fascist and communist regimes, thus, are the acceptance that some things (including the choice of one's life partner) should be left to the private discretion of families and individuals; the possibility to think freely, without fear of persecution at the hands of the authorities (which includes freedom of religious belief), or pressures by the regime to conform; and the freedom for creative individuals to write the books or music that they wish, to paint subjects as they please, and to engage in scientific, historical, and other research without limitations set by the government—which, in turn, allows a society ruled by a liberal democratic government to advance, potentially in all spheres, more rapidly than a society under tyrannical rule. Obviously, the freedom to write whatever music one wishes—to pull out one flower from the bouquet—will not be of equal interest to all citizens, just as the right to own a gun (protected under the second amendment to the U.S. constitution) is not equally attractive for all Americans. Or again, the right to start a business is surely more meaningful to a person of means than to a homeless person. What I hope these examples serve to remind us is that the benefits of liberal democracy are experienced differently by different people. But, at its best, the set of rights and freedoms in a liberal democracy can provide a framework first, within which most, if not all, people are better off than under a regime where such rights and freedoms are not respected and second, in which people can develop their talents.

But what of *illiberal* democracy, in which a “tyranny of the majority” oppresses members of various minorities, “leav[ing] fewer means of escape, penetrating much more deeply into the details of life, and enslaving the soul itself”?³⁵⁸ An oppressive society is usually associated with an oppressive regime, but which half of this bad situation is the bigger problem? A fanciful sketch may help to clarify the dimensions of the problem. Imagine that you live on a large island, in the middle of one of the oceans and that there are three states on this island: the Republic of A on the western third of the island, Republic B on the eastern third of the island, and Republic C, sandwiched between these two other republics. Your country, the Republic of C, is torn up by civil war, most cities have been reduced to rubble, the economy is a disaster, and there are death squads rampaging across the republic: you need to flee. You

have two options. In the west, the Republic of A, where the government is a liberal democratic government with laws providing for freedoms of speech, press, assembly, religion, and so on, but where the people generally are intolerant, hate the religion of which you are a member, and have no respect for other people's lives or property. Or in the east, the Republic of B, a one-party state the regime of which has banned all religion, controls all media, holds only fake elections, and demands full conformity in behavior and speech, but where people are tolerant, always ready to help those in need, and maintain a lively underground press and underground culture. Which of these countries should you choose for your new home?

A choice between an oppressive regime and an oppressive society is a harsh one. There are, however, two reasons why it may be safer to flee to the Republic of B. First, in the Republic of B you would have the chance to make genuine friends, people on whose friendship you can probably rely, and even if the regime has banned all religion, in fact religious people maintain their faith underground. You might not have many true friends, since an oppressive regime will scare many, sometimes most, people into submission; but such people are nonetheless there. Second, regimes can be changed more rapidly than cultures. Even though both can change, societies and cultures usually take one to three generations to change in any meaningful way (unless a foreign occupation authority induces cultural change, as happened in Germany in the half-decade after World War II). Moreover, depending on just how much the people in the Republic of A hate your religion, there might be a third reason to avoid that country: in the Republic of A, you might be killed for your religious faith. But some 200 nautical miles due north there is a somewhat smaller island, where people have set up a liberal state known as the Republic of D. In this republic, neither the government nor the society is oppressive; both respect liberal values, both are tolerant. This, I think obviously, would be the best of the four.

In actual life, however, it is probably impossible to find any cases corresponding exactly to either the Republic of A or the Republic of B (although Poland in the 1980s looked, up to a point, somewhat like the Republic of B, with a strong independent society by-passing government-controlled institutions).³⁵⁹ This is because there is a mutual

influence between government and society. Just as a government attempts to fashion society “in its own image and likeness” through schools, legislation, public addresses, political rallies (whether dignified or violent), and so on, so too does a society affect and shape government through the activities of Churches, NGOs, lobby groups (such as the National Rifle Association in the United States), protest marches, public speeches, and so on. That said, an oppressive government makes life difficult; an oppressive society can make life impossible.

Anarchism represents a different case. Judging both from anarchist rhetoric and from the brief experience with anarchism in war-torn Spain, it would seem, on the face of it, that an anarchist collective might be able to match liberal democracy when it comes to rights and freedoms—or can it? The communists, fascists, and anarchists all talked of freedom, just as liberal democrats do. But their respective concepts of freedom were quite different. Mussolini, it will be recalled, wanted the *state* to be free, but held that people would share in the state’s freedom by adhering to the slogan “believe, obey, fight.” The word “obey” in this slogan suggests that the “freedom” of the Fascists does not exactly leave individuals free. The Spanish anarchists shifted freedom to the *collective*, holding that working people should consult, collaborate, and construct a common life together. Although the anarchists did allow “individualists” to live separately, they considered this to be a second-best choice. Anarchists were most interested in the equality of people and did not talk in terms of individuals’ rights *against* the community, only of individuals’ rights *as part of* the community. And, where the Soviet Union is concerned, there is the Constitution of 1977, in which Article 50 granted citizens full freedoms of speech, press, and assembly but, in a key qualification, specified that these freedoms were to be enjoyed “in accordance with the people’s interests and for the purpose of strengthening and developing the socialist system.”³⁶⁰ What characterizes *liberalism*, and hence also liberal democracy, is the conviction that individuals matter not just within the social context, but as individuals, and that people should be free to follow their destinies.

To return to the present, our generation is confronted by a rising tide of right-wing, intolerant “sado-populism,” to use Snyder’s term. But the three contemporary cases, while following a common playbook (take

over the judiciary, muzzle the press, fan intolerance of designated out-groups, etc.), also differ in at least two important ways. First, both Viktor Orbán and Jarosław Kaczyński had served previously as prime minister before their electoral victories in 2010 and 2015, respectively; Trump, by contrast, had no political experience and very little political knowledge at the time of his election as president. Second, there is the difference in the relative speed with which these leaders have transformed their countries. In Hungary and Poland, Fidesz and PiS moved with amazing speed, with the former introducing a new constitution as early as April 2011. In Trump's America, by contrast, we are witnessing "creeping authoritarianism," which, as Brian Klaas has warned, "poses the greatest threat to democracy in the United States [today]."³⁶¹ Those in the resistance are right in thinking that it is possible to push back and save democracy, at least in its plutocratic form, in the United States. But it is troubling to consider that, while three-quarters of Americans born in the 1930s believe that it is vital to preserve democratic institutions and the democratic way of life, fewer than one-third of those born in the 1980s agree.³⁶²

Notes

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- 2 Ibid., 285.
- 3 Norberto Bobbio, *The Future of Democracy: A defence of the rules of the game*, trans. from Italian by Roger Griffin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 25.
- 4 See Benedict de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, in *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, vol. 1, trans. by R. H. M. Elwes, 2nd ed., (London: George Bell & Sons, 1889; reprinted by Kessinger Publishing, 2011).
- 5 See the examples provided in Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76, no. 6 (November-December 1997).
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- 9 Ibid., I, xii, 46–47.
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- 18 Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, Part Two (1792), in Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, with an introduction by Eric Foner (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), especially chap. 5; and John W. Seaman, "Thomas Paine: Ransom, Civil Peace, and the Natural Right to Welfare," *Political Theory*, vol. 16, no. 1 (February 1988), especially 120–21.
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 - 25 Dahl, *On Democracy*, 177 (emphasis removed). By *polyarchal democracy*, Dahl means "a modern representative democracy with universal suffrage" and characterized, among other things, by "free, fair, and frequent elections," "alternative sources of information," and autonomous associations. For Dahl's complete list of six essential institutions, see 85–90.
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Glossary

Alternative modernity. A modernity shorn of liberal-democratic and traditional-conservative culture alike, requiring a destruction or uprooting of much of existing culture and a total reconstruction of society. *(This definition is also found in chapter 1.)*

Anarchism. An antistate ideology committed to the principle of communal, especially working-class, solidarity and to the idea that people can organize their society without the relations of subordination and control that come with the formation of a formal government. *(This definition is also found in chapter 4.)*

Authoritarianism. A system of government characterized by the exclusion of the body of the citizenry from the enjoyment of any effective check on the government, the absence of the rule of law, the lack of government responsiveness to the wishes of the people, and the absence or contraction of basic freedoms such as freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and freedom of assembly.

Collectivism. A doctrine holding that the needs and interests of the nation/race/working class/community necessarily take precedence over the needs and interests of individuals. *(This definition is also found in chapter 1.)*

Communism. A political program emphasizing the monopolization of power by a “vanguard party” committed to a program of promoting economic equality. In practice—in its Soviet, East European, and Chinese variants—communism involved one-party rule, an official ideology, economic planning by the state, and the regulation of religious life, and, in most cases, also agricultural collectivization and the cult of the leader.

Democracy. A system of government characterized by the election by the citizens of representatives in competitive elections offering a plurality of candidates, the rule of law, guarantees of freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and freedom of assembly. Democracy is usually thought to involve also the separation of powers (Montesquieu), an informed public (Robert Dahl), and the real possibility for the party in power to be displaced through elections (Adam Przeworski).

Fascism. A species of totalitarianism, seeking to remake and homogenize society in line with a vision of an alternative modernity in which the state not the individual enjoys liberty and in which human equality is rejected. Fascists also aspired to generate a new kind of human being and a new civilization in which there could be no recognition of the autonomy of private life. Fascism was also characterized by a palingenetic myth of social rebirth, and by ultra-nationalism, rejection of the rule of law in favor of obedience to the Leader, and the acceptance of violence as a legitimate means to combat one's enemies.

Ideology. A systematic code of meanings assigned to historical events and symbols, in which lessons are drawn from the past, in which the nation's role and identity in the present are defined, and in which challenges in and solutions for the future are outlined. (*This definition is also found in chapter 1.*)

Moral value. Any fundamental good, such as freedom, equality, or human rights or, in the case of the Nazis, the rights of the race. (*This definition is also found in chapter 1.*)

Nazism. An ideology or system of government characterized by systematic racism, extreme xenophobia, a determination to carry out an extreme eugenics program by means of euthanasia and mass murder, and characterized by megalomania and organizational confusion. Although it shares Fascism's hostility to the Enlightenment and its products, it offers a vision of the future, which is both clearer than and distinct from that of Italian Fascism. (*This definition is also found in chapter 3.*)

Plutocracy. Rule by the rich; in contemporary times, typically a system in which the legislature and the judiciary are corrupted by large corporations, which are thereby able, much of the time, to prevent

the adoption of policies of which they do not approve. Plutocracies are typically built up through outright theft, thus qualifying also as kleptocracies.

Values. *See* moral value.

Vision. A blueprint for the future, in which certain core moral values are protected, in which certain goals for society are spelled out, and in which the political means to achieve those goals are specified and justified. (*This definition is also found in chapter 1.*)

Further Reading

My intention with this section is not to list the various sources I used in the preparation of this book; the reader may find that by consulting my endnotes. My purpose here is rather to guide the interested reader to some of the most useful books in English, including also some classics.

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